

A
Brief History
Of The Immortals
Of Non-Hindu
Civilizations

*In association with Aryavart
Sanatan Vahini 'Dharmraj'*



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Shri Bhagavatananda Guru



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Preface

Dear Readers!

This is a moment of true excitement for both me and you that this book is in your hands. It is often seen that a wide range of our society wants to know about the mythological deities and religious rituals of ancient civilizations. But sadly, till the best of my knowledge, yet I haven't seen any book on this topic which consists of all the renowned deities of the past. So, I decided to work on it.

It started three years ago from the library of my secondary school {Lady K.C. Roy Memorial School, Ranchi}, where I encountered a copy of the famous epic Odyssey. Since then, my interest towards the non-Hindu gods influenced me to study further and the result is in your hands. Some may question that why you have mentioned the word '**non-Hindu**' in it. This is because of the reason that when you think about the origin of various religions, you have seen that before Muhammad and Jesus, there was no Islam and Christianity. Before Mahavir and Buddha, the related religions didn't exist. And this is common to every religion except the Sanatan.

From the darkest corners of past to the endless brightness of future, the only thing which is common is Hinduism. Sanatan is neither mythological nor fictitious. It is historical, eternal, scientific and truth worthy. It is from the origin of the universe to the dawn of the doomsday. When you are writing on myths (as this book contains), you have to care about only the sayings, novels and folklores. But when you colour the pages with topics which have historical and archaeological evidences, then you need to be more careful about the authentic literatures and science behind the events. So I am planning to write a book exclusively on Hindu deities, but it would require a *lot of study, knowledge and time*.

This book consists of three sectors:-

CHAPTER 01 → INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 02 → DEITIES OF VARIOUS CIVILIZATIONS

CHAPTER 03 → GREEK GODS AND THEIR MYTHS

It is clear by the name that the first chapter contains the introduction and builds the platform for the topics of book. The second chapter contains brief description of the gods and angels of the civilizations such as Egyptian,

Norse, Greek, Roman, Celtic, Irish, Welsh and Japanese. The third chapter has been written exclusively for the Greek gods as they are the only ones, who have very vast description available. Also, the Greek rituals and deities are very much close to the Bhartiya Society. Although they were not as developed as Bharat, but Greek culture looked like the shadow of Bharat. There was absence of clothes in Greek culture. They lived in a tropical zone so they used very less clothes, and sometimes they were completely clothless. So I encountered a great difficulty in choosing the photos for this book as almost all the authentic paintings and statues of Greek gods and goddesses were completely naked. The Greeks were also very much fond of sex and war, so the events of war and rapes (or permitted sex) between their divine deities is quite common. So, go ahead and enjoy it. You can reply with your valuable reviews and suggestions at either *nagshakti.vishvarakshak@gmail.com* or *mail.asvdharmraj@gmail.com*

1

Introduction

From ancient culture to the so called modern world, the thing which is common is faith and fiction. In religious belief, a deity is either a natural or supernatural being, who is thought of as holy, divine, or sacred. Some religions have one supreme deity, while others have multiple deities of various ranks.

A being with powers greater than those of ordinary humans, but who interacts with humans, positively or negatively, in ways that carry humans to new levels of consciousness beyond the grounded preoccupations of ordinary life is known as Deity. Deities are depicted in a variety of forms, but are also frequently expressed as having human form. Some faiths and traditions consider it blasphemous to imagine or depict the deity as having any concrete form. Deities are often thought to be immortal, and are commonly assumed to have personalities and to possess consciousness, intellects, desires, and emotions comparable but usually superior to those of humans. A male deity is a god, while a female deity is a goddess.

Historically, natural phenomena whose causes were not well understood, such as lightning and catastrophes such as earthquakes and floods, were attributed to deities. They were thought to be able to work supernatural miracles and to be the authorities and controllers of various aspects of human life (such as birth or an afterlife). Some deities were asserted to be the directors of time and fate itself, the givers of human law and morality, the ultimate judges of human worth and behavior, or designers of the Universe. This is very much true and justified that miracles happen. Not because this is the part of book, but I have experienced the divines and their powers personally in many Tantric and ordinary rituals performed by me.

The word “deity” derives from the Latin *deus* (god), which is related through a common Indo-European origin to Sanskrit *deva* (god), *devi* (goddess), *divya* (transcendental, spiritual). The root is related to words for “sky”, such as Latin *dies* (day), and the Sanskrit *div*, *divus*, *diu* (“sky, day, shine”). Also related are “divine” and “divinity,” from the Latin “*divinus*,” from “*divus*.”

Panel from an ancient Roman sarcophagus depicting the creation of humans by Prometheus, with deities including Minerva (Roman Athena) and Mercury (Hermes) looking on Theories and myths about, and modes of



worship of, deities are largely a matter of religion. At present, the majority of humans are at least nominal adherents of some religion, and this has been true throughout recorded human history. Human burials from between 50,000 and 30,000 B.C. provide evidence of human belief in an afterlife and possibly in deities, although it is not clear when human belief in deities became the dominant view.

Some deities are thought to be invisible or inaccessible to humans, dwelling mainly in otherworldly, remote or secluded and holy places, such as the concepts of Heaven, and Hell, the sky, the underworld, under the sea, in the high mountains or deep forests, or in a supernatural plane or celestial sphere. Typically, they rarely reveal or manifest themselves to humans, and make themselves known mainly through their effects. Monotheistic deities are often thought of as being omnipresent, though invisible.

Often people feel an obligation or submission to their deity, although some view their deity as something that serves them.

Folk religions usually contain active and worldly deities. In polytheism, deities are conceived of as a counterpart to humans. Humans are defined by their station subject to the deities, nourishing them with prayers or sacrifices, and deities are defined by their sovereignty over humans, punishing and rewarding them, but also dependent on their worship. This same concept is also present in monotheistic and henotheistic religions.

The boundary between human and divine in most cultures is by no means absolute. Demigods are the offspring from a union of a human with a deity, and most royal houses in Antiquity claimed divine ancestors. Beginning with Djedefra (26th century B.C.), the Egyptian pharaohs called themselves “Son of Ra” as well as “Bull (son) of his Mother” among their many titles. One, Hatshepsut, who ruled from 1479 B.C. to 1458 B.C., traced her heritage not only to her father, Thutmose I, who would have become deified upon his death—but also to the deity, Mut, as a direct ancestor.

Some human rulers, such as the Kings of Egypt, the Japanese Tennos, and some Roman Emperors have been worshipped by their subjects as deities while still alive. The earliest ruler known to have claimed divinity is Naram-Sin of Akkad (22nd century B.C.). In many cultures, rulers and other prominent or holy persons may be thought to become deities upon death. Due to what some women perceive as excessive patriarchy in monotheistic faiths, some have turned to goddesses and deities with more flexible gender roles.

A demigod is a divine or supernatural being in classical mythology. The term has been used in various ways at different times and can refer to a figure who has attained divine status after death, a minor deity, or a mortal who is the offspring of a god and a human. The English term is a *claque* of the Latin *semideus*, “half-god”, which is probably a coining by the Roman poet Ovid in reference to less important gods, such as dryads.

In the ancient Greek and Roman world the word did not have a consistent definition. It was rarely used and had a number of different meanings. The earliest recorded use of the term is in the archaic Greek poets Homer and Hesiod. Both describe dead heroes as *hemitheoi*, “half gods”. This did not mean that they had one parent who was divine and one who was mortal. Instead, according to Price, those who demonstrated “strength, power, good family, and good behavior” were termed heroes, and after death they could be called *hemitheoi*, a process she refers to as “heroization”. Pindar also uses the term frequently as a synonym for hero.

According to the Roman author Cassius Dio, Julius Caesar was declared a demigod by the Roman Senate after his victory at Thapsus. However, Dio was writing in the third century and modern critics have cast doubt on this. The first Roman to employ the term demigod may have been the poet Ovid who used the Latin *semideus* several times in reference to minor deities. The poet Lucan also uses the term to speak of Pompey attaining divinity upon his death. In later antiquity, the Roman writer Martianus Capella proposed a hierarchy of gods: the gods proper, or major gods; the *genii* or *daemones*; the demigods or *semones* (who dwell in the upper atmosphere); the *manes* and ghosts of heroes (who dwell in the lower atmosphere); and the earth-dwelling gods like fauns and satyrs.

Demigods are important figures in Rick Riordan’s Percy Jackson books, where many of the characters, including Percy Jackson himself, are demigods. In Riordan’s work, a demigod is strictly defined as an individual born of one human and one divine parent. Greek mythology is the body of myths and teachings that belong to the ancient Greeks, concerning their gods and heroes, the nature of the world, and the origins and significance of their own cult and ritual practices. It was a part of the religion in ancient Greece. Modern scholars refer to and study the myths in an attempt to shed light on the religious and political institutions of Ancient Greece and its civilization, and to gain understanding of the nature of myth-making itself.

Greek mythology is explicitly embodied in a large collection of narratives, and implicitly in Greek representational arts, such as vase-paintings and votive

gifts. Greek myth attempts to explain the origins of the world, and details the lives and adventures of a wide variety of gods, goddesses, heroes, heroines and mythological creatures. These accounts initially were disseminated in an oral-poetic tradition; today the Greek myths are known primarily from Greek literature. The oldest known Greek literary sources, Homer's epic poems *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, focus on the Trojan War and its aftermath. Two poems by Homer's near contemporary Hesiod, the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, contain accounts of the genesis of the world, the succession of divine rulers, the succession of human ages, the origin of human woes, and the origin of sacrificial practices. Myths are also preserved in the Homeric Hymns, in fragments of epic poems of the Epic Cycle, in lyric poems, in the works of the tragedians of the fifth century BC, in writings of scholars and poets of the Hellenistic Age, and in texts from the time of the Roman Empire by writers such as Plutarch and Pausanias.

Archaeological findings provide a principal source of detail about Greek mythology, with gods and heroes featured prominently in the decoration of many artifacts. Geometric designs on pottery of the eighth century BC depict scenes from the Trojan cycle as well as the adventures of Heracles. In the succeeding Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic periods, Homeric and various other mythological scenes appear, supplementing the existing literary evidence. Greek mythology has had an extensive influence on the culture, arts, and literature of Western civilization and remains part of Western heritage and language. Poets and artists from ancient times to the present have derived inspiration from Greek mythology and have discovered contemporary significance and relevance in the themes.

Greek mythology is known today primarily from Greek literature and representations on visual media dating from the Geometric period from c. 900–800 B.C. onward. In fact, literary and archaeological sources integrate, sometimes mutually supportive and sometimes in conflict; however, in many cases, the existence of this corpus of data is a strong indication that many elements of Greek mythology have strong factual and historical roots.

Mythical narration plays an important role in nearly every genre of Greek literature. Nevertheless, the only general mythographical handbook to survive from Greek antiquity was the *Library of Pseudo-Apollodorus*. This work attempts to reconcile the contradictory tales of the poets and provides a grand summary of traditional Greek mythology and heroic legends. Apollodorus of Athens lived from c. 180–125 B.C. and wrote on many of these topics. His writings may have formed the basis for the collection; however the

“Library” discusses events that occurred long after his death, hence the name Pseudo-Apollodorus.

The myth of Prometheus first was attested by Hesiod and then constituted the basis for a tragic trilogy of plays, possibly by Aeschylus, consisting of Prometheus Bound, Prometheus Unbound, and Prometheus Pyrphoros. Among the earliest literary sources are Homer’s two epic poems, the Iliad and the Odyssey. Other poets completed the “epic cycle”, but these later and lesser poems now are lost almost entirely. Despite their traditional name, the “Homeric Hymns” have no direct connection with Homer. They are choral hymns from the earlier part of the so-called Lyric age. Hesiod, a possible contemporary with Homer, offers in his Theogony (Origin of the Gods) the fullest account of the earliest Greek myths, dealing with the creation of the world; the origin of the gods, Titans, and Giants; as well as elaborate genealogies, folktales, and etiological myths. Hesiod’s Works and Days, a didactic poem about farming life, also includes the myths of Prometheus, Pandora, and the Five Ages. The poet gives advice on the best way to succeed in a dangerous world, rendered yet more dangerous by its gods.

Lyrical poets often took their subjects from myth, but their treatment became gradually less narrative and more allusive. Greek lyric poets including Pindar, Bacchylides, Simonides, and bucolic poets such as Theocritus and Bion, relate individual mythological incidents. Additionally, myth was central to classical Athenian drama. The tragic playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides took most of their plots from myths of the age of heroes and the Trojan War. Many of the great tragic stories (e.g. Agamemnon and his children, Oedipus, Jason, Medea, etc.) took on their classic form in these tragedies. The comic playwright Aristophanes also used myths, in The Birds and The Frogs.

Historians Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, and geographers Pausanias and Strabo, who traveled throughout the Greek world and noted the stories they heard, supplied numerous local myths and legends, often giving little-known alternative versions. Herodotus in particular, searched the various traditions presented him and found the historical or mythological roots in the confrontation between Greece and the East. Herodotus attempted to reconcile origins and the blending of differing cultural concepts.

The poetry of the Hellenistic and Roman ages was primarily composed as a literary rather than cultic exercise. Nevertheless, it contains many important details that would otherwise be lost. This category includes the works of:

- * The Roman poets Ovid, Statius, Valerius Flaccus, Seneca and Virgil with Servius’s commentary.

- * The Greek poets of the Late Antique period: Nonnus, Antoninus Liberalis, and Quintus Smyrnaeus.
- * The Greek poets of the Hellenistic period: Apollonius of Rhodes, Callimachus, Pseudo-Eratosthenes, and Parthenius.

Prose writers from the same periods who make reference to myths include Apuleius, Petronius, Lollianus, and Heliodorus. Two other important non-poetical sources are the *Fabulae* and *Astronomica* of the Roman writer styled as Pseudo-Hyginus, the *Imagines* of Philostratus the Elder and Philostratus the Younger, and the *Descriptions* of Callistratus.

Finally, a number of Byzantine Greek writers provide important details of myth, much derived from earlier now lost Greek works. These preservers of myth include Arnobius, Hesychius, the author of the *Suda*, John Tzetzes, and Eustathius. They often treat mythology from a Christian moralizing perspective.

The discovery of the Mycenaean civilization by the German amateur archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann in the nineteenth century, and the discovery of the Minoan civilization in Crete by the British archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans in the twentieth century, helped to explain many existing questions about Homer's epics and provided archaeological evidence for many of the mythological details about gods and heroes. Unfortunately, the evidence about myths and rituals at Mycenaean and Minoan sites is entirely monumental, as the Linear B script (an ancient form of Greek found in both Crete and mainland Greece) was used mainly to record inventories, although certain names of gods and heroes have been tentatively identified.

Geometric designs on pottery of the eighth century BC depict scenes from the Trojan cycle, as well as the adventures of Heracles. These visual representations of myths are important for two reasons. Firstly, many Greek myths are attested on vases earlier than in literary sources: of the twelve labors of Heracles, for example, only the Cerberus adventure occurs in a contemporary literary text. Secondly, visual sources sometimes represent myths or mythical scenes that are not attested in any extant literary source. In some cases, the first known representation of a myth in geometric art predates its first known representation in late archaic poetry, by several centuries. In the Archaic (c. 750–c. 500 B.C.), Classical (c. 480–323 B.C.), and Hellenistic (323–146 B.C.) periods, Homeric and various other mythological scenes appear, supplementing the existing literary evidence.

Greek mythology has changed over time to accommodate the evolution of their culture, of which mythology, both overtly and in its unspoken assumptions, is an index of the changes. In Greek mythology's surviving literary forms, as found mostly at the end of the progressive changes, it is inherently political, as Gilbert Cuthbertson has argued. The earlier inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula were an agricultural people who, using Animism, assigned a spirit to every aspect of nature. Eventually, these vague spirits assumed human forms and entered the local mythology as gods. When tribes from the north of the Balkan Peninsula invaded, they brought with them a new pantheon of gods, based on conquest, force, prowess in battle, and violent heroism. Other older gods of the agricultural world fused with those of the more powerful invaders or else faded into insignificance.

After the middle of the archaic period, myths about relationships between male gods and male heroes became more and more frequent, indicating the parallel development of pedagogic pederasty, thought to have been introduced around 630 B.C. By the end of the fifth century B.C., poets had assigned at least one *Eromenos*, an adolescent boy who was their sexual companion, to every important god except Ares and to many legendary figures. Previously existing myths, such as those of Achilles and Patroclus, also then were cast in a pederastic light. Alexandrian poets at first, then more generally literary mythographers in the early Roman Empire, often readapted stories of Greek mythological characters in this fashion.

The achievement of epic poetry was to create story-cycles and, as a result, to develop a new sense of mythological chronology. Thus Greek mythology unfolds as a phase in the development of the world and of humans. While self-contradictions in these stories make an absolute timeline impossible, an approximate chronology may be discerned. The resulting mythological "history of the world" may be divided into three or four broader periods:

- * The myths of origin or age of gods (*Theogonies*, "births of gods"): myths about the origins of the world, the gods, and the human race.
- * The age when gods and mortals mingled freely: stories of the early interactions between gods, demigods, and mortals.
- * The age of heroes (heroic age), where divine activity was more limited. The last and greatest of the heroic legends is the story of the Trojan War and after (which is regarded by some researchers as a separate fourth period).

While the age of gods often has been of more interest to contemporary students of myth, the Greek authors of the archaic and classical eras had a clear preference for the age of heroes, establishing a chronology and record of human accomplishments after the questions of how the world came into being were explained. For example, the heroic *Iliad* and *Odyssey* dwarfed the divine-focused *Theogony* and *Homeric Hymns* in both size and popularity. Under the influence of Homer the “hero cult” leads to a restructuring in spiritual life, expressed in the separation of the realm of the gods from the realm of the dead (heroes), of the Chthonic from the Olympian. In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod makes use of a scheme of Four Ages of Man (or Races): Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Iron. These races or ages are separate creations of the gods, the Golden Age belonging to the reign of Cronos, the subsequent races the creation of Zeus. The presence of evil was explained by the myth of Pandora, when all of the best of human capabilities, save hope, had been spilled out of her overturned jar. In *Metamorphoses*, Ovid follows Hesiod’s concept of the four ages.

“Myths of origin” or “creation myths” represent an attempt to explain the beginnings of the universe in human language. The most widely accepted version at the time, although a philosophical account of the beginning of things, is reported by Hesiod, in his *Theogony*. He begins with Chaos, a yawning nothingness. Out of the void emerged Gaia (the Earth) and some other primary divine beings: Eros (Love), the Abyss (the Tartarus), and the Erebus. Without male assistance, Gaia gave birth to Uranus (the Sky) who then fertilized her. From that union were born first the Titans—six males: Coeus, Crius, Cronus, Hyperion, Iapetus, and Oceanus; and six females: Mnemosyne, Phoebe, Rhea, Theia, Themis, and Tethys. After Cronus was born, Gaia and Uranus decreed no more Titans were to be born. They were followed by the one-eyed Cyclopes and the Hecatonchires or Hundred-Handed Ones, who were both thrown into Tartarus by Uranus. This made Gaia furious. Cronus (the wily, youngest and most terrible of Gaia’s children), was convinced by Gaia to castrate his father. He did this, and became the ruler of the Titans with his sister-wife Rhea as his consort, and the other Titans became his court.

A motif of father-against-son conflict was repeated when Cronus was confronted by his son, Zeus. Because Cronus had betrayed his father, he feared that his offspring would do the same, and so each time Rhea gave birth, he snatched up the child and ate it. Rhea hated this and tricked him by hiding Zeus and wrapping a stone in a baby’s blanket, which Cronus ate. When Zeus was full grown, he fed Cronus a drugged drink which caused him

to vomit, throwing up Rhea's other children and the stone, which had been sitting in Cronus's stomach all along. Zeus then challenged Cronus to war for the kingship of the gods. At last, with the help of the Cyclopes (whom Zeus freed from Tartarus), Zeus and his siblings were victorious, while Cronus and the Titans were hurled down to imprisonment in Tartarus. Zeus was plagued by the same concern and, after a prophecy that the offspring of his first wife, Metis, would give birth to a god "greater than he"—Zeus swallowed her. She was already pregnant with Athena, however, and she burst forth from his head—fully-grown and dressed for war.

The earliest Greek thought about poetry considered the theogonies to be the prototypical poetic genre—the prototypical mythos—and imputed almost magical powers to it. Orpheus, the archetypal poet, also was the archetypal singer of theogonies, which he uses to calm seas and storms in Apollonius' *Argonautica*, and to move the stony hearts of the underworld gods in his descent to Hades. When Hermes invents the lyre in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, the first thing he does is sing about the birth of the gods. Hesiod's *Theogony* is not only the fullest surviving account of the gods, but also the fullest surviving account of the archaic poet's function, with its long preliminary invocation to the Muses. Theogony also was the subject of many lost poems, including those attributed to Orpheus, Musaeus, Epimenides, Abaris, and other legendary seers, which were used in private ritual purifications and mystery-rites. There are indications that Plato was familiar with some version of the Orphic theogony. A silence would have been expected about religious rites and beliefs, however, and that nature of the culture would not have been reported by members of the society while the beliefs were held. After they ceased to become religious beliefs, few would have known the rites and rituals. Allusions often existed, however, to aspects that were quite public.

Images existed on pottery and religious artwork that were interpreted and more likely, misinterpreted in many diverse myths and tales. A few fragments of these works survive in quotations by Neoplatonist philosophers and recently unearthed papyrus scraps. One of these scraps, the Derveni Papyrus now proves that at least in the fifth century B.C. a theogonic-cosmogonic poem of Orpheus was in existence.

The first philosophical cosmologists reacted against, or sometimes built upon, popular mythical conceptions that had existed in the Greek world for some time. Some of these popular conceptions can be gleaned from the poetry of Homer and Hesiod. In Homer, the Earth was viewed as a flat disk

a float on the river of Oceanus and overlooked by a hemispherical sky with sun, moon, and stars. The Sun (Helios) traversed the heavens as a charioteer and sailed around the Earth in a golden bowl at night. Sun, earth, heaven, rivers, and winds could be addressed in prayers and called to witness oaths. Natural fissures were popularly regarded as entrances to the subterranean house of Hades and his predecessors, home of the dead. Influences from other cultures always afforded new themes.

According to Classical-era mythology, after the overthrow of the Titans, the new pantheon of gods and goddesses was confirmed. Among the principal Greek gods were the Olympians, residing on Mount Olympus under the eye of Zeus. (The limitation of their number to twelve seems to have been a comparatively modern idea.) Besides the Olympians, the Greeks worshipped various gods of the countryside, the satyr-god Pan, Nymphs (spirits of rivers), Naiads (who dwelled in springs), Dryads (who were spirits of the trees), Nereids (who inhabited the sea), river gods, Satyrs, and others. In addition, there were the dark powers of the underworld, such as the Erinyes (or Furies), said to pursue those guilty of crimes against blood-relatives. In order to honor the Ancient Greek pantheon, poets composed the Homeric Hymns (a group of thirty-three songs). Gregory Nagy regards “the larger Homeric Hymns as simple preludes (compared with Theogony), each of which invokes one god”.

The gods of Greek mythology are described as having essentially corporeal but ideal bodies. According to Walter Burkert, the defining characteristic of Greek anthropomorphism is that “the Greek gods are persons, not abstractions, ideas or concepts”. Regardless of their underlying forms, the Ancient Greek gods have many fantastic abilities; most significantly, the gods are not affected by disease, and can be wounded only under highly unusual circumstances. The Greeks considered immortality as the distinctive characteristic of their gods; this immortality, as well as unfading youth, was insured by the constant use of nectar and ambrosia, by which the divine blood was renewed in their veins.

Each god descends from his or her own genealogy, pursues differing interests, has a certain area of expertise, and is governed by a unique personality; however, these descriptions arise from a multiplicity of archaic local variants, which do not always agree with one another. When these gods are called upon in poetry, prayer or cult, they are referred to by a combination of their name and epithets, that identify them by these distinctions from other manifestations of themselves (e.g., Apollo Musagetes is “Apollo, [as] leader of the Muses”). Alternatively the epithet may identify a particular and

localized aspect of the god, sometimes thought to be already ancient during the classical epoch of Greece.

Most gods were associated with specific aspects of life. For example, Aphrodite was the goddess of love and beauty, Ares was the god of war, Hades the ruler of the underworld, and Athena the goddess of wisdom and courage. Some gods, such as Apollo and Dionysus, revealed complex personalities and mixtures of functions, while others, such as Hestia (literally hearth) and Helios (literally sun), were little more than personifications. The most impressive temples tended to be dedicated to a limited number of gods, who were the focus of large pan-Hellenic cults. It was, however, common for individual regions and villages to devote their own cults to minor gods. Many cities also honored the more well-known gods with unusual local rites and associated strange myths with them that were unknown elsewhere. During the heroic age, the cult of heroes (or demi-gods) supplemented that of the gods.

Bridging the age when gods lived alone and the age when divine interference in human affairs was limited was a transitional age in which gods and mortals moved together. These were the early days of the world when the groups mingled more freely than they did later. Most of these tales were later told by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and they are often divided into two thematic groups: tales of love, and tales of punishment.



The Parliament of Gods leaded by Zeus at The Olympus

Tales of love often involve incest, or the seduction or rape of a mortal woman by a male god, resulting in heroic offspring. The stories generally

suggest that relationships between gods and mortals are something to avoid; even consenting relationships rarely have happy endings. In a few cases, a female divinity mates with a mortal man, as in the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, where the goddess lies with Anchises to produce Aeneas. The second type (tales of punishment) involves the appropriation or invention of some important cultural artifact, as when Prometheus steals fire from the gods, when Tantalus steals nectar and ambrosia from Zeus' table and gives it to his own subjects—revealing to them the secrets of the gods, when Prometheus or Lycaon invents sacrifice, when Demeter teaches agriculture and the Mysteries to Triptolemus, or when Marsyas invents the aulos and enters into a musical contest with Apollo. Ian Morris considers Prometheus' adventures as “a place between the history of the gods and that of man”. An anonymous papyrus fragment, dated to the third century, vividly portrays Dionysus' punishment of the king of Thrace, Lycurgus, whose recognition of the new god came too late, resulting in horrific penalties that extended into the afterlife. The story of the arrival of Dionysus to establish his cult in Thrace was also the subject of an Aeschylean trilogy. In another tragedy, Euripides' *The Bacchae*, the king of Thebes, Pentheus, is punished by Dionysus, because he disrespected the god and spied on his Maenads, the female worshippers of the god.

In another story, based on an old folktale-motif, and echoing a similar theme, Demeter was searching for her daughter, Persephone, having taken the form of an old woman called Doso, and received a hospitable welcome from Celeus, the King of Eleusis in Attica. As a gift to Celeus, because of his hospitality, Demeter planned to make his son Demophon a god, but she was unable to complete the ritual because his mother Metanira walked in and saw her son in the fire and screamed in fright, which angered Demeter, who lamented that foolish mortals do not understand the concept and ritual.

The age in which the heroes lived is known as the heroic age. The epic and genealogical poetry created cycles of stories clustered around particular heroes or events and established the family relationships between the heroes of different stories; they thus arranged the stories in sequence. According to Ken Dowden, “There is even a saga effect: We can follow the fates of some families in successive generations”.

After the rise of the hero cult, gods and heroes constitute the sacral sphere and are invoked together in oaths and prayers which are addressed to them. In contrast to the age of gods, during the heroic age the roster of heroes is never given fixed and final form; great gods are no longer born,

but new heroes can always be raised up from the army of the dead. Another important difference between the hero cult and the cult of gods is that the hero becomes the centre of local group identity. The monumental events of Heracles are regarded as the dawn of the age of heroes. To the Heroic Age are also ascribed three great events: the Argonautic expedition, the Theban Cycle and the Trojan War.

Some scholars believe that behind Heracles' complicated mythology there was probably a real man, perhaps a chieftain-vassal of the kingdom of Argos. Some scholars suggest the story of Heracles is an allegory for the sun's yearly passage through the twelve constellations of the zodiac. Others point to earlier myths from other cultures, showing the story of Heracles as a local adaptation of hero myths already well established. Traditionally, Heracles was the son of Zeus and Alcmene, granddaughter of Perseus. His fantastic solitary exploits, with their many folk-tale themes, provided much material for popular legend. He is portrayed as a sacrificier, mentioned as a founder of altars, and imagined as a voracious eater himself; it is in this role that he appears in comedy, while his tragic end provided much material for tragedy — Heracles is regarded by Thalia Papadopoulou as “a play of great significance in examination of other Euripidean dramas”. In art and literature Heracles was represented as an enormously strong man of moderate height; his characteristic weapon was the bow but frequently also the club. Vase paintings demonstrate the unparalleled popularity of Heracles, his fight with the lion being depicted many hundreds of times.

Heracles also entered Etruscan and Roman mythology and cult, and the exclamation “mehercule” became as familiar to the Romans as “Herakleis” was to the Greeks. In Italy he was worshipped as a god of merchants and traders, although others also prayed to him for his characteristic gifts of good luck or rescue from danger. Heracles attained the highest social prestige through his appointment as official ancestor of the Dorian kings. This probably served as a legitimation for the Dorian migrations into the Peloponnese. Hyllus, the eponymous hero of one Dorian phyle, became the son of Heracles and one of the Heracleidae or Heraclids (the numerous descendants of Heracles, especially the descendants of Hyllus — other Heracleidae included Macaria, Lamos, Manto, Bianor, Tlepolemus, and Telephus). These Heraclids conquered the Peloponnesian kingdoms of Mycenae, Sparta and Argos, claiming, according to legend, a right to rule them through their ancestor. Their rise to dominance is frequently called the “Dorian invasion”. The Lydian and later the Macedonian kings, as rulers of the same rank, also became Heracleidae.

Other members of this earliest generation of heroes such as Perseus, Deucalion, Theseus and Bellerophon, have many traits in common with Heracles. Like him, their exploits are solitary, fantastic and border on fairy tale, as they slay monsters such as the Chimera and Medusa. Bellerophon's adventures are commonplace types, similar to the adventures of Heracles and Theseus. Sending a hero to his presumed death is also a recurrent theme of this early heroic tradition, used in the cases of Perseus and Bellerophon.

The only surviving Hellenistic epic, the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes (epic poet, scholar, and director of the Library of Alexandria) tells the myth of the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts to retrieve the Golden Fleece from the mythical land of Colchis. In the *Argonautica*, Jason is impelled on his quest by king Pelias, who receives a prophecy that a man with one sandal would be his nemesis. Jason loses a sandal in a river, arrives at the court of Pelias, and the epic is set in motion. Nearly every member of the next generation of heroes, as well as Heracles, went with Jason in the ship *Argo* to fetch the Golden Fleece. This generation also included Theseus, who went to Crete to slay the Minotaur; Atalanta, the female heroine, and Meleager, who once had an epic cycle of his own to rival the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Pindar, Apollonius and the *Bibliotheca* endeavor to give full lists of the Argonauts.

Although Apollonius wrote his poem in the 3rd century B.C., the composition of the story of the Argonauts is earlier than *Odyssey*, which shows familiarity with the exploits of Jason (the wandering of *Odysseus* may have been partly founded on it). In ancient times the expedition was regarded as a historical fact, an incident in the opening up of the Black Sea to Greek commerce and colonization. It was also extremely popular, forming a cycle to which a number of local legends became attached. The story of *Medea*, in particular, caught the imagination of the tragic poets.

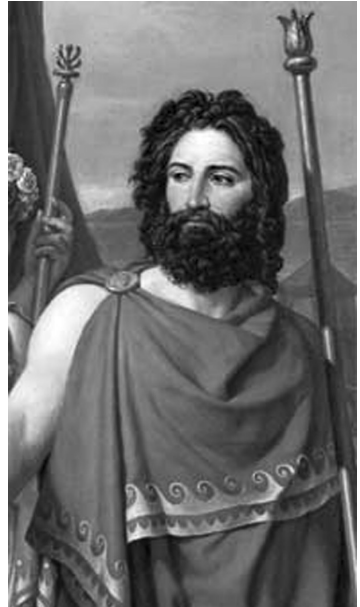
In between the *Argo* and the Trojan War, there was a generation known chiefly for its horrific crimes. This includes the doings of Atreus and Thyestes at Argos. Behind the myth of the house of Atreus (one of the two principal heroic dynasties with the house of Labdacus) lies the problem of the devolution of power and of the mode of accession to sovereignty. The twins Atreus and Thyestes with their descendants played the leading role in the tragedy of the devolution of power in Mycenae.

The Theban Cycle deals with events associated especially with Cadmus, the city's founder, and later with the doings of Laius and Oedipus at Thebes; a series of stories that lead to the eventual pillage of that city at the hands

of the Seven Against Thebes and Epigoni. (It is not known whether the Seven Against Thebes figured in early epic.) As far as Oedipus is concerned, early epic accounts seem to have him continuing to rule at Thebes after the revelation that Iokaste was his mother, and subsequently marrying a second wife who becomes the mother of his children — markedly different from the tale known to us through tragedy (e.g. Sophocles' Oedipus the King) and later mythological accounts.

Greek mythology culminates in the Trojan War, fought between Greece and Troy, and its aftermath. In Homer's works, such as the Iliad, the chief stories have already taken shape and substance, and individual themes were elaborated later, especially in Greek drama. The Trojan War also elicited great interest in the Roman culture because of the story of Aeneas, a Trojan hero whose journey from Troy led to the founding of the city that would one day become Rome, as recounted in Virgil's Aeneid (Book II of Virgil's Aeneid contains the best-known account of the sack of Troy). Finally there are two pseudo-chronicles written in Latin that passed under the names of Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius.

The Trojan War cycle, a collection of epic poems, starts with the events leading up to the war: Eris and the golden apple of Kallisti, the Judgement of Paris, the abduction of Helen, the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis. To recover Helen, the Greeks launched a great expedition under the overall command of Menelaus' brother, Agamemnon, king of Argos or Mycenae, but the Trojans refused to return Helen. The Iliad, which is set in the tenth year of the war, tells of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, who was the finest Greek warrior, and the consequent deaths in battle of Achilles' beloved comrade Patroclus and Priam's eldest son, Hector. After Hector's death the Trojans were joined by two exotic allies, Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, and Memnon, king of the



(Painting of King Agamemnon)

Ethiopians and son of the dawn-goddess Eos. Achilles killed both of these, but Paris then managed to kill Achilles with an arrow in the heel. Achilles' heel was the only part of his body which was not invulnerable to damage by

human weaponry. Before they could take Troy, the Greeks had to steal from the citadel the wooden image of Pallas Athena (the Palladium). Finally, with Athena's help, they built the Trojan Horse. Despite the warnings of Priam's daughter Cassandra, the Trojans were persuaded by Sinon, a Greek who feigned desertion, to take the horse inside the walls of Troy as an offering to Athena; the priest Laocoon, who tried to have the horse destroyed, was killed by sea-serpents. At night the Greek fleet returned, and the Greeks from the horse opened the gates of Troy. In the total sack that followed, Priam and his remaining sons were slaughtered; the Trojan women passed into slavery in various cities of Greece. The adventurous homeward voyages of the Greek leaders (including the wanderings of Odysseus and Aeneas (the Aeneid), and the murder of Agamemnon) were told in two epics, the Returns (the lost Nostoi) and Homer's Odyssey. The Trojan cycle also includes the adventures of the children of the Trojan generation (e.g., Orestes and Telemachus).



Fury of Achilles as painted by Coypel

The Trojan War provided a variety of themes and became a main source of inspiration for Ancient Greek artists (e.g. metopes on the Parthenon depicting the sack of Troy); this artistic preference for themes deriving from the Trojan Cycle indicates its importance to the Ancient Greek civilization. The

same mythological cycle also inspired a series of posterior European literary writings. For instance, Trojan Medieval European writers, unacquainted with Homer at first hand, found in the Troy legend a rich source of heroic and romantic storytelling and a convenient framework into which to fit their own courtly and chivalric ideals. 12th century authors, such as Benoît de Sainte-Maure (*Roman de Troie* [Romance of Troy, 1154–60]) and Joseph of Exeter (*De Bello Troiano* [On the Trojan War, 1183]) describe the war while rewriting the standard version they found in Dictys and Dares. They thus follow Horace's advice and Virgil's example: they rewrite a poem of Troy instead of telling something completely new.

Some of the more famous heroes noted for their inclusion in the Trojan War were:

On the Trojan side: Aeneas, Hector and Paris.

On the Greek side: Ajax (Both), Achilles, King Agamemnon, Menelaus and Odysseus.

Mythology was at the heart of everyday life in Ancient Greece. Greeks regarded mythology as a part of their history. They used myth to explain natural phenomena, cultural variations, traditional enmities and friendships. It was a source of pride to be able to trace the descent of one's leaders from a mythological hero or a god. Few ever doubted that there was truth behind the account of the Trojan War in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. According to Victor Davis Hanson, a military historian, columnist, political essayist and former Classics professor, and John Heath, associate professor of Classics at Santa Clara University, the profound knowledge of the Homeric epos was deemed by the Greeks the basis of their acculturation. Homer was the "Education of Greece" and his poetry "the Book".

The philosopher expelled the study of Homer, of the tragedies and of the related mythological traditions from his utopian Republic. After the rise of philosophy, history, prose and rationalism in the late 5th century B.C., the fate of myth became uncertain, and mythological genealogies gave place to a conception of history which tried to exclude the supernatural (such as the Thucydidean history). While poets and dramatists were reworking the myths, Greek historians and philosophers were beginning to criticize them.

A few radical philosophers like Xenophanes of Colophon were already beginning to label the poets' tales as blasphemous lies in the 6th century B.C.; Xenophanes had complained that Homer and Hesiod attributed to the gods "all that is shameful and disgraceful among men; they steal, commit adultery,

and deceive one another". This line of thought found its most sweeping expression in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*. Plato created his own allegorical myths (such as the vision of Er in the *Republic*), attacked the traditional tales of the gods' tricks, thefts and adulteries as immoral, and objected to their central role in literature. Plato's criticism was the first serious challenge to the Homeric mythological tradition, referring to the myths as "old wives' chatter". For his part Aristotle criticized the Pre-socratic quasi-mythical philosophical approach and underscored that "Hesiod and the theological writers were concerned only with what seemed plausible to themselves, and had no respect for us ... But it is not worth taking seriously writers who show off in the mythical style; as for those who do proceed by proving their assertions, we must cross-examine them".

Nevertheless, even Plato did not manage to wean himself and his society from the influence of myth; his own characterization for Socrates is based on the traditional Homeric and tragic patterns, used by the philosopher to praise the righteous life of his teacher:

But perhaps someone might say: "Are you then not ashamed, Socrates, of having followed such a pursuit, that you are now in danger of being put to death as a result?" But I should make to him a just reply: "You do not speak well, Sir, if you think a man in whom there is even a little merit ought to consider danger of life or death, and not rather regard this only, when he does things, whether the things he does are right or wrong and the acts of a good or a bad man. For according to your argument all the demigods would be bad who died at Troy, including the son of Thetis, who so despised danger, in comparison with enduring any disgrace, that when his mother (and she was a goddess) said to him, as he was eager to slay Hector, something like this, I believe, My son, if you avenge the death of your friend Patroclus and kill Hector, you yourself shall die; for straightway, after Hector, is death appointed unto you. (Hom. Il. 18.96)

He, when he heard this, made light of death and danger, and feared much more to live as a coward and not to avenge his friends, and said, Straightway may I die, after doing vengeance upon the wrongdoer, that I may not stay here, jeered at beside the curved ships, a burden of the earth.

Hanson and Heath estimate that Plato's rejection of the Homeric tradition was not favorably received by the grassroots Greek civilization. The old myths were kept alive in local cults; they continued to influence poetry and to form the main subject of painting and sculpture. More sportingly, the 5th century B.C. tragedian Euripides often played with the old traditions, mocking them, and

through the voice of his characters injecting notes of doubt. Yet the subjects of his plays were taken, without exception, from myth. Many of these plays were written in answer to a predecessor's version of the same or similar myth. Euripides mainly impugns the myths about the gods and begins his critique with an objection similar to the one previously expressed by Xenocrates: the gods, as traditionally represented, are far too crassly anthropomorphic.

Cicero saw himself as the defender of the established order, despite his personal skepticism with regard to myth and his inclination towards more philosophical conceptions of divinity. During the Hellenistic period, mythology took on the prestige of elite knowledge that marks its possessors as belonging to a certain class. At the same time, the skeptical turn of the Classical age became even more pronounced. Greek mythographer Euhemerus established the tradition of seeking an actual historical basis for mythical beings and events. Although his original work (*Sacred Scriptures*) is lost, much is known about it from what is recorded by Diodorus and Lactantius.

Rationalizing hermeneutics of myth became even more popular under the Roman Empire, thanks to the physicalist theories of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy. Stoics presented explanations of the gods and heroes as physical phenomena, while the Euhemerists rationalized them as historical figures. At the same time, the Stoics and the Neoplatonists promoted the moral significations of the mythological tradition, often based on Greek etymologies. Through his Epicurean message, Lucretius had sought to expel superstitious fears from the minds of his fellow-citizens. Livy, too, is skeptical about the mythological tradition and claims that he does not intend to pass judgement on such legends (*fabulae*). The challenge for Romans with a strong and apologetic sense of religious tradition was to defend that tradition while conceding that it was often a breeding-ground for superstition. The antiquarian Varro, who regarded religion as a human institution with great importance for the preservation of good in society, devoted rigorous study to the origins of religious cults. In his *Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum* (which has not survived, but Augustine's *City of God* indicates its general approach) Varro argues that whereas the superstitious man fears the gods, the truly religious person venerates them as parents. In his work he distinguished three kinds of gods:

1. The gods of nature: personifications of phenomena like rain and fire.
2. The gods of the poets: invented by unscrupulous bards to stir the passions.
3. The gods of the city: invented by wise legislators to soothe and enlighten the populace.

Roman Academic Cotta ridicules both literal and allegorical acceptance of myth, declaring roundly that myths have no place in philosophy. Cicero is also generally disdainful of myth, but, like Varro, he is emphatic in his support for the state religion and its institutions. It is difficult to know how far down the social scale this rationalism extended. Cicero asserts that no one (not even old women and boys) is so foolish as to believe in the terrors of Hades or the existence of Scyllas, centaurs or other composite creatures, but on the other hand, the orator elsewhere complains of the superstitious and credulous character of the people. *De Natura Deorum* is the most comprehensive summary of Cicero's line of thought.

In Ancient Roman times, a new Roman mythology was born through synchronization of numerous Greek and other foreign gods. This occurred because the Romans had little mythology of their own and inheritance of the Greek mythological tradition caused the major Roman gods to adopt characteristics of their Greek equivalents. The gods Zeus and Jupiter are an example of this mythological overlap. In addition to the combination of the two mythological traditions, the association of the Romans with eastern religions led to further synchronizations. For instance, the cult of Sun was introduced in Rome after Aurelian's successful campaigns in Syria. The Asiatic divinities Mithras (that is to say, the Sun) and Ba'al were combined with Apollo and Helios into one *Sol Invictus*, with conglomerated rites and compound attributes. Apollo might be increasingly identified in religion with Helios or even Dionysus, but texts retelling his myths seldom reflected such developments. The traditional literary mythology was increasingly dissociated from actual religious practice. The worship of *Sol* as special protector of the emperors and of the empire remained the chief imperial religion until it was replaced by Christianity.

The surviving 2nd century collection of Orphic Hymns (Second Century AD) and the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius (fifth century) are influenced by the theories of rationalism and the syncretizing trends as well. The Orphic Hymns are a set of pre-classical poetic compositions, attributed to Orpheus, himself the subject of a renowned myth. In reality, these poems were probably composed by several different poets, and contain a rich set of clues about prehistoric European mythology. The stated purpose of the *Saturnalia* is to transmit the Hellenic culture Macrobius has derived from his reading, even though much of his treatment of gods is colored by Egyptian and North African mythology and theology (which also affect the interpretation of Virgil). In *Saturnalia*, mythographical comments reappear influenced by the Euhemerists, the Stoics and the Neo-Platonists.

Japanese mythology embraces Shinto and Buddhist traditions as well as agriculturally based folk religion. The Shinto pantheon comprises innumerable Kami (Japanese for “god(s)” or “spirits”). Japanese myths, as generally recognized in the mainstream today, are based on the *Kojiki*, the *Nihon Shoki*, and some complementary books. The *Kojiki*, or “Record of Ancient Matters”, is the oldest surviving account of Japan’s myths, legends and history. The *Shintōshū* describes the origins of Japanese deities from a Buddhist perspective, while the *Hotsuma Tsutae* records a substantially different version of the mythology. One notable feature of Japanese mythology is its explanation of the origin of the Imperial Family, which has been used historically to assign godhood to the imperial line. The title of the Emperor of Japan, *tennō*, means “heavenly sovereign”.

In the Japanese myth, the first deities which came into existence, appearing at the time of the creation of the universe, are collectively called *Kotoamatsukami*. Later, the seven generations of Kami, known as *Kamiyonanayo* (“Seven Generations of the Age of the Gods”), emerged, following the formation of heaven and earth. The first two generations are individual deities called *Hitorigami*, while the five that followed came into being as male/female pairs of Kami: brothers and sisters that were also married couples. In this chronicle, the *Kamiyonanayo* comprise 12 deities in total.

In contrast, the *Nihon Shoki* states that the *Kamiyonanayo* group was the first to appear after the creation of the universe, as opposed to the *Kamiyonanayo* appearing after the formation of heaven and earth. It also states that the first three generations of deities are *hitorigami* (individual deities) and that the later generations of deities are pairs of the opposite gender, as compared to the *Kojiki*’s two generations of *hitorigami*.

Japan’s creation narrative can be divided into the birth of the deities (*Kamiumi*) and the birth of the land (*Kuniumi*). The seventh and last generation of *Kamiyonanayo* were *Izanagi no Mikoto* (“Exalted Male”) and *Izanami no Mikoto* (“Exalted Female”), and they would be responsible for the creation of the Japanese archipelago and would engender other deities.

To help them to achieve this, *Izanagi* and *Izanami* were given a *naginata* decorated with jewels, named *Ame-no-nuboko* (Heavenly Jeweled Spear). The two deities then went to the bridge between heaven and earth, *Amenoukhashi* (Floating Bridge of Heaven) and churned the sea below with the halberd. Drops of salty water formed the island, *Onogoro* (self-forming). The deities descended from the bridge of heaven and made their home on the

island. Eventually, they fell in love and wished to mate. So they built a pillar called Amenomihashira around which they built a palace called Yashirodono (the hall whose area is 8 arms' length squared). Izanagi and Izanami circled the pillar in opposite directions, and when they met on the other side, Izanami, the female deity, spoke first in greeting. Izanagi didn't think that this was proper, but they mated anyway. They had two children, Hiruko (leech child) and Awashima (pale island), but the children were badly formed and are not considered gods in their original form. (Hiruko later became the Japanese god, Ebisu.)

The parents, who were dismayed at their misfortune, put the children into a boat and sent them to sea, and then petitioned the other gods for an answer about what they had done wrong. They were informed that Izanami's lack of manners was the reason for the defective births: a woman should never speak prior to a man; the male deity should have spoken first in greeting during the ceremony. So Izanagi and Izanami went around the pillar again, and this time, when they met, Izanagi spoke first. Their next union was successful.

From their union were born the Ōyashima, or the eight great islands of Japan: Awaji, Iyo (later Shikoku), Oki, Tsukushi (later Kyūshū), Iki, Tsushima, Sado, Yamato (later Honshū). Note that Hokkaidō, Chishima and Okinawa were not part of Japan in ancient times. Izanami died giving birth to Kagutsuchi (incarnation of fire), also called Homusubi (causer of fire). She was then buried on Mount Hiba, at the border of the old provinces of Izumo and Hoki, near modern-day Yasugi of Shimane Prefecture. In anger, Izanagi killed Kagutsuchi. His death also created dozens of deities. The gods who were born from Izanagi and Izanami are symbolic aspects of nature and culture.

Izanagi lamented the death of Izanami and undertook a journey to Yomi (the dark land of the dead). Izanagi found little difference between Yomi and the land above, except for the eternal darkness. However, this suffocating darkness was enough to make him ache for light and life. Quickly, he searched for Izanami and found her. At first, Izanagi could not see her for she was well hidden in the shadows. Nevertheless, he asked her to return with him. Izanami spat at Izanagi and informed him that he was too late. She had already eaten the food of the underworld and now belonged to the land of the dead.

Izanagi was shocked at this news, but he refused to give in to her wishes to be left to the dark embrace of Yomi. Izanami agreed to return to the world but first requested to have some time to rest. She instructed Izanagi to not come into her bedroom. After a long wait, Izanami did not come out of her

bedroom, and Izanagi was worried. While Izanami was sleeping, he took the comb that bound his long hair and set it alight as a torch. Under the sudden burst of light, he saw the horrid form of the once beautiful and graceful Izanami. The flesh of her ravaged body was rotting and was overrun with maggots and foul creatures. Crying out loud, Izanagi could no longer control his fear and started to run, intending to return to the living and to abandon his death-ridden wife. Izanami woke up shrieking and indignant and chased after him. Izanami instructed the shikome, or foul women, hunt for the frightened Izanagi and to bring him back.

Izanagi, thinking quickly, hurled his headdress, which became a bunch of black grapes. The shikome fell on this but continued pursuit. Next, Izanagi threw his comb, which became a clump of bamboo shoots. Now it was Yomi's creatures that began to give chase, but Izanagi urinated against a tree and created a great river that increased his lead. Unfortunately, the shikome still pursued Izanagi, who began to hurl peaches at them. He knew that this would not delay them for long, but he was nearly free, for the boundary of Yomi was now close at hand. Izanagi burst through the entrance and quickly pushed a boulder to the entrance of Yomi. Izanami screamed from behind this barricade and told Izanagi that, if he left her, she would destroy 1,000 living people every day. He furiously replied that he would give life to 1,500. And so began the existence of Death, caused by the hands of the proud Izanagi, the abandoned wife Izanami.

As could be expected, Izanagi went on to purify himself after recovering from his descent to Yomi. As he undressed and removed the adornments of his body, each item that he dropped to the ground formed a deity. Even more gods came into being when he went to the water to wash himself. The most important ones were created once he washed his face:

- * Amaterasu (incarnation of the sun) from her left eye,
- * Tsukuyomi (incarnation of the moon) from her right eye, and
- * Susanoo (incarnation of storms) from his nose.

Izanagi went on to divide the world between them with Amaterasu inheriting the heavens, Tsukuyomi taking control of the night and moon and the storm god Susanoo owning the seas. In some versions of the myth, Susanoo rules not only the seas but also all elements of a storm, including snow and hail, and, in rare cases, even sand.

Amaterasu, the powerful sun goddess of Japan, is the most well known deity of Japanese mythology. Her feuding with Susanoo, her uncontrollable

brother, however, is equally infamous and appears in several tales. One story tells about Susanoo's wicked behavior toward Izanagi, who, tired of Susanoo's repeated complaints, banishes him to Yomi. Susanoo grudgingly acquiesces, but has first to attend some unfinished business. He goes to Takamagahara (heaven) to bid farewell to his sister, Amaterasu. Amaterasu knows that her unpredictable brother does not have good intentions and is prepared for battle. "For what purpose do you come here?" asks Amaterasu. "To say farewell," answers Susanoo.

But she does not believe him and requests a contest for proof of his good faith. A challenge is set as to who can bring forth more noble and divine children. Amaterasu creates three women from Susanoo's sword, while Susanoo makes five men from Amaterasu's ornament chain. Amaterasu claims the title to the five are attributed to Susanoo. Both gods declare themselves to be victorious. Amaterasu's insistence in her claim drives Susanoo to violent campaigns that reach their climax when he hurls a half-flayed pony (an animal sacred to Amaterasu) into Amaterasu's weaving hall and causes the death of one of her attendants. Amaterasu, angered by the display, hides in the cave called Iwayado. As the sun goddess disappears into the cave, darkness covers the world.

All of the gods and goddesses strive to coax Amaterasu out of the cave, but she ignores them all. Finally, the kami of merriment, Ame-no-Uzume, hatches a plan. She places a large bronze mirror on a tree, facing Amaterasu's cave. Then, Uzume clothes herself in flowers and leaves, overturns a washtub and begins to dance upon it, drumming the tub with her feet. Finally, Uzume sheds the leaves and flowers and dances naked. All of the male gods roar with laughter, and Amaterasu becomes curious. When she peeks outside, a ray of light called "dawn" escapes and Amaterasu is dazzled by the beautiful goddess that she sees, this being her own reflection in the mirror. The god, Ameno-Tajikarawo, pulls her from the cave, which is sealed with a shimenawa. Surrounded by merriment, Amaterasu's depression disappears, and she agrees to return with her light. Uzume is then known as the kami of dawn as well as of mirth.

Susanoo, exiled from heaven, comes to Izumo Province (now part of Shimane Prefecture). It is not long before he meets an old man and an old woman sobbing beside their daughter. The old couple explain that they originally had eight daughters who were devoured, one after the other, by the dragon, Yamata no Orochi (eight-forked serpent, who is said to originate from Kōsi—now Hokuriku region). The terrible dragon had eight heads and eight tails, stretched over eight hills, and is said to have eyes as red as good wine. Kushinada-hime (rice paddy princess) was the last of the eight daughters.

Susanoo, who knew about the old couple's relation to Amaterasu, offers his assistance in return for their beautiful daughter's hand in marriage. The parents accept, and Susanoo transforms Kushinada into a comb and hides her safely in his hair. He also orders a large fence-like barrier to be built around the house. The fence has eight gates, with eight tables placed at each gate and eight casks placed on each table. Each cask is filled with eight-times-brewed rice wine.

Orochi arrives and finds his path blocked. After boasting about his prowess, he finds that he cannot get through the barrier. His keen sense of smell takes in the sake—which Orochi loves—and the eight heads are now faced with a problem. They want to drink the delicious sake, yet the fence blocks access to the sake. One head suggests that they simply smash the barrier, but that would knock over the sake. Another proposed that they combine their fiery breath and burn the fence to ash, but then the sake would evaporate. The heads begin to search for an opening. They find the hatches, and, eager for the sake, they wish to poke their heads through to drink it. Yet, the eighth head, which is the wisest, warns his brethren about the folly of such an act and volunteers to go through first to ensure that all is well. Susanoo waits for his chance. He allows the head to drink some sake in safety and to report to the others that there is no danger. All eight heads plunge through the hatches and greedily drink every drop of the sake.

As the heads finish, Susanoo launches his attack on Orochi. Drunken from drinking so much sake, the great serpent is no match for the spry Susanoo who decapitates and slays Orochi. A nearby river is said to have turned red with the blood of the defeated serpent. As Susanoo cuts the dragon into pieces, he finds an excellent sword from a tail of the dragon that his sword had been unable to cut. The sword is later presented to Amaterasu and named Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi (Sword of the Gathering Clouds of Heaven, which was later called Kusanagi, "Grass Cutter"). This sword was to feature prominently in many other tales.

Mostly known by his nickname Ōkuninushi, Ōnamuji was a descendant of Susanoo, and represented the power structure localized in the Izumo area. Ōkuninushi's people succeeded in unifying territory to some measure, but later relinquished control to the Yamato-based clans.

A tale of how the merciful Ōkuninushi helped the beleaguered rabbit or hare is of enduring fame, and often told as a sort of a Mukashibanashi or "once upon a time tale". It is found in Kojiki but not recorded in the "Nihongi".

Ōkuninushi (at the time he was just Ōnamuji without the august nickname) and his brothers, eighty gods altogether were rival suitors courting Princess Yakami/Yagami of Inaba to become his wife. They started out of their homeland of Izumo headed for the neighboring province, when the group encountered a rabbit who has been flayed (by crocodile-fish, usually interpreted as sharks) and lying in agony upon a sea shore. In a wicked-hearted gesture, they advise the rabbit to bathe in the briny sea and blow himself dry in the wind. The rabbit finds himself in worse agony. Ōnamuji, who came lagging behind, takes pity on the creature and tells it to wash himself in fresh water, then roll in the scattered fleece of the cattail plants. The cured rabbit makes a divined prediction that Ōnamuji will be the one to win Princess Yakami, “though thou bearest the bag”, (Evidently his brother was treating him as a luggage carrier).

As the hare predicted, Princess Yakami pronounces her choice of Ōnamuji for husband before the eighty gods, and they all conspire and kill him twice over. His mother petitions Kamimusubi, one of the creator deities, and resuscitates him each time, finally sending him off to seek Susanoo who has been banished to the Netherworld (Ne-no-kuni), and to obtain his wise counsel. Here Ōnamuji meets face to face with Susanoo’s daughter Suserihime and they immediately marry. The crafty Susanoo tests Ōnamuji several times, but, in the end, Susanoo approves of the young boy and foretells Ōnamuji’s victory over his brothers. Although the Yamato tradition attributes the creation of the Japanese islands to Izanagi and Izanami, the Izumo tradition claims that Ōnamuji, along with a dwarf god called Sukunabiko, contribute to, or at least finish, the creation of the Japanese islands.

The episode of the Tenson kōrin (Descent of the Heavenly Grandson) begins with description of how the heavenly gods (Ama-tsu-kami) who dwelled in the Heavenly Plains (Takama-ga-hara) peered down upon the earth below (known by the stilted name Ashihara no Nakatsukuni (Reedy Plains Middle World). It represents Japan, not the whole world), and dispatched various members of their own kind to subjugate it. Amaterasu had decreed her own grandson Ninigi to rule over the terrestrial world, but the terrestrial gods (kuni-tsu-kami) were not altogether willing to hand it over, and odd sorts of terrestrial gods were still lurking about making it too dangerous.

Some of the gods first appointed to quell the middle world were derelict in their mission, or joined leagues with the terrestrial gods. After several false starts, two gods were finally successful. They were Ame-no-ohabari (a.k.a Itsu-no-ohabari; elsewhere this kami is said to be a sword) and Takemikazuchi. They embarked aboard the Ame-no-torifune or Deity Heavenly-Bird-Boat

to their military campaign. These two sabre-rattling deities were able to frighten Ōkuninushi's two sons into flight, causing Ōkuninushi to abdicate and relinquish the territories to the Heavenly Grandson.

Amaterasu was now able to decree the Tenson kōrin (Descent of the Heavenly Grandson), also referred to as amori, amakudari (descent from heaven), installing her grandson to rule over the terrestrial middle world. She endowed him the Three Sacred Treasures (Imperial Regalia of Japan). The necklace Yasakani no magatama (now in the Imperial Palace in Tokyo); The mirror Yata no kagami (now in the Grand Shrine of Ise); and The sword Kusanagi (now in the Atsuta Shrine in Nagoya). The mirror was to be worshipped as a representation of Amaterasu. A number of deities were made to make the descent at this time. Ninigi and his company went down to the earth and came to Himuka (Hyūga province, today's Miyazaki prefecture), there he founded his palace.

Ninigi met Konohanasakuya-hime (symbol of flowers), the daughter of Yamatsumi (master of mountains), and they fell in love. Ninigi asked Yamatsumi for his daughter's hand. The father was delighted and offered both of his daughters, Iwanaga (symbol of rocks) and Sakuya (symbol of flowers). However, Ninigi married only Sakuya and refused Iwanaga. "Iwanaga is blessed with eternity and Sakuya with prosperity", Yamatsumi said in regret, "by refusing Iwanaga, your life will be brief from now on". Consequently, Ninigi and his descendants became mortal. Sakuya conceived by a night and Ninigi doubted her. To prove legitimacy of her children, Sakuya swore by her luck and took a chance; she set fire to her room when she had given birth to her three babies. By this, Ninigi knew her chastity. The names of the children were Hoderi, Hosuseri and Howori.

Hoderi or "Fire-Shine" had the gift of the bounty of the sea, and gained his livelihood by fishing (and bore the nickname **Umisachihiko** or Luck of the Sea). The younger son Howori or "Fire-Fade" had the gift of the bounty of the mountains, and was a hunter (and nicknamed **Yamasachihiko** or "Luck of the Mountains").

One day, Luck of the Mountains asked his elder brother Luck of the Sea to exchange their tools and swap places for a day. He wanted to try his bid at fishing. But he did not catch a single fish, and worse, he lost his borrowed fishhook. To make amends, he shattered the very sword he was wearing to make a hundred, then a thousand hooks to replace what he lost, but the elder brother would accept nothing but the original fishhook.

Luck of the Mountains was sitting on a beach balefully weeping, there came to his aid Shiotsuchi-no-oji (one of the deities now enshrined at Shiogama Jinja). The tide god built him a small ship described as being Manashikatsuma (basket without interstices), and sent him on a journey to the fish-scaled palace of the Watatsumi (Sea God, often conceived of as a dragon-god). There he had a fateful meeting with the Sea God's daughter Princess Toyotama, and married her. After three years, he remembered his brother and his fishhook, and was longing to return home.

Watatsumi gathered his Piscean minions, and soon the fishhook was found in the throat of a bream (Tai) and restored to Luck of the Mountains. The Sea God also imparted two magical balls: Shihomitsutama (Tide-flowing ball) which could cause a flood, and Shihohirutama (Tide-ebbing ball) which could cause water to recede and dry up. And he gave additional strategic advice to gain advantage from his contentious elder brother. So riding on a fathom-long crocodile-fish or shark (hitohiro-wani) they returned to dry land.

The pregnant Princess Toyotama built a cormorant feather-thatched maternity house and pleaded her husband for privacy, as she would be reverting to her true shape while delivering her child. But Howori (Luck of the Mountains) was overcome with curiosity, and peeped inside to discover her transformed into a crawling 8-fathom "croc-fish" (shark, dragon), and scuttered away in fright. Ashamed and disgusted by her husband's breach of trust, she abandoned the newborn and returned to sea. The infant prince was named Ugaya meaning "cormorant house". Ugaya married his aunt, the sea princess Tamayori and had five children, including Yamatobiko, who was later to become Emperor Jimmu. In the Nihongi, the "Age of the Gods" (kamiyo section ends here, and is followed by sections under the titles of the reigns of each Emperor.

The first legendary Emperor of Japan, best known by his posthumous name of Emperor Jimmu (Transition from Age of the Gods to Human Age), was referred to in the records by the title of Iwarebiko (Kamu-yamato Iwarebiko no-mikoto³). He is the son of Ugaya, a descendent of Ninigi, and the sea princess Tamayori. His given name was Hiko-hohodemi. With claimed descendent from sun-goddess Amaterasu through Ninigi, Emperor Jimmu launched an expedition to capture Yamato.

After taking control of Yamato province, he established the imperial throne and acceded in the year of kanototori (conventionally dated to 660 B.C.). His pedigree is summarized as follows.

- * Izanagi is born of his own accord.
- * Amaterasu is born from the left eye of Izanagi.
- * Oshihomimi is born from an ornament of Amaterasu.
- * Ninigi is a son of Oshihomimi and Akizushi.
- * Howori is a son of Ninigi and Sakuya.
- * Ugaya is a son of Howori and Toyotama.
- * Iwarebiko is a son of Ugaya and Tamayori.

After Jimmu's death, an elder prince named Tagishishimi (who was not first in line as successor) moved to consolidate power under him while everyone else was in mourning, and plotted to slay his two younger half-brothers. The plot was suppressed, and the younger prince who had the courage to pluck the bow and shoot Tagishishimi fatally was cede the crown to become the next emperor, Suizei.

Of the eight emperors who succeeded Jimmu, there is very little record of their deeds, so they are described collectively under Book III of Nihon Shoki. Regarding Emperor Suizei, the foregoing description of how he suppressed his elder brother's insurrection. And for the other legendary rulers, not much more than their genealogy is given. The 10th, Sujin and 11th emperor Suinin are discussed under their own books of Nihon Shoki.

Chinese mythology refers to those myths found in the historical geographic area of China: these include myths in Chinese and other languages, as transmitted by Han Chinese as well as other ethnic groups (of which fifty-six are officially recognized by the current administration of China). Chinese mythology includes creation myths and legends, such as myths concerning the founding of Chinese culture and the Chinese state. As in many cultures' mythologies, Chinese mythology has in the past been believed to be, at least in part, a factual recording of history. Thus, in the study of historical Chinese culture, many of the stories that have been told regarding characters and events which have been written or told of the distant past have a double tradition: one which presents a more historicized and one which presents a more mythological version.

The dozens of ethnic minority groups of the country of China have their own languages and their own folklore, and many have their own writing: much of which contains valuable historical and cultural information as well as many unique myths. Some myths are widely shared across multiple ethnic groups, but may exist as versions with some differences.

Historians have written evidence of Chinese mythological symbolism from the 12th century B.C. in the Oracle bone script. Legends were passed down for over a thousand years before being written in books such as *Classic of Mountains and Seas*. Other myths continued to be passed down through oral traditions like theater and song before being recorded as novels such as *Epic of Darkness*. Imperial historical documents and philosophical canons such as *Book of Rites*, *Records of the Grand Historian*, *Book of Documents*, and *Lüshi Chunqiu* all contain Chinese myths.

Some myths survive in theatrical or literary formats as plays or novels. Books in the *shenmo* genre of vernacular fiction revolve around gods and monsters. Important mythological fiction, seen as definitive records of these myths, includes:

- * Verse poetry associated with the ancient state of Chu such as “*Lisao*”, “*Jiu Ge*”, and “*Heavenly Questions*”, contained in the *Chuci* anthology, traditionally attributed to the authorship of Qu Yuan of Chu
- * *Fengshen Bang* (*Investiture of the Gods*), a mythological fiction dealing with the founding of the Zhou dynasty
- * *Journey to the West* attributed to Wu Cheng'en, published in the 1590s; a fictionalized account of the pilgrimage of Xuanzang to India to obtain Buddhist religious texts in which the main character encounters ghosts, monsters, and demons, as well as the *Flaming Mountains*
- * *Baishe Zhuan*, a romantic tale set in Hangzhou involving a female snake who attained human form and fell in love with a man

The concept of a principal or presiding deity has fluctuated over time in Chinese mythology. Examples include:

- * **Shangdi**, also sometimes *Huángtiān Dàdì* appeared as early as the Shang dynasty. In later eras, he was more commonly referred to as *Huángtiān Shàngdì*. The use of *Huángtiān Dàdì* refers to the Jade Emperor and Tian.
- * **Yu Di** (the **Jade Emperor**) appeared in literature after the establishment of Taoism in China; his appearance as Yu Huang dates back to beyond the times of Huangdi, Nüwa, or Fuxi.
- * **Tian** (Heaven) appeared in literature c. 700 B.C., possibly earlier as dating depends on the date of the *Shujing* (*Book of Documents*).

There are no creation-oriented narratives for Tian. The qualities of Tian and Shangdi appear to have merged in later literature and are now worshiped as one entity (Huángtiān Shàngdì) in, for example, the Beijing's Temple of Heaven. The extent of the distinction between Tian and Shangdi is debated. The sinologist Herrlee Creel claims that an analysis of the Shang oracle bones reveals Shangdi to have preceded Tian as a deity, and that Zhou dynasty authors replaced the term "Shangdi" with "Tian" to cement the claims of their influence.

- * **Nüwa** appeared in literature no earlier than c. 350 B.C. Her companion, **Fuxi**,) was her brother and husband. They are sometimes worshiped as the ultimate ancestor of all humankind, and are often represented as half-snake, half-humans. It is sometimes believed that Nüwa molded humans from clay for companionship. She repaired the sky after Gong Gong damaged the pillar supporting the heavens.
- * **Pangu**, written about by Taoist author Xu Zheng c. 200 AD, was claimed to be the first sentient being and creator, "making the heavens and the earth."

During or following the age of Nüwa and Fuxi came the age of the Three August Ones and Five Emperors. These legendary rulers ruled between c. 2850 B.C. to 2205 B.C., before the Xia dynasty.

The list of names comprising the Three August Ones and Five Emperors vary widely among sources. The most widely circulated and popular version is:

- * The Three August Ones (Huáng)
 - ◆ Fuxi: companion of Nüwa
 - ◆ Huangdi (Huang Emperor): often regarded as the first sovereign of the Chinese nation.
 - ◆ Shennong (Divine Farmer): reputedly taught the ancients agriculture and medicine.
- * The Five Emperors (Dì)
 - ◆ Shaohao: leader of the Dongyi (Eastern Barbarians); his pyramidal tomb is in present-day Shandong
 - ◆ Zhuanxu: grandson of the Huang Emperor.
 - ◆ Emperor Ku: great-grandson of the Huang Emperor and nephew of Zhuanxu.

- ◆ Yao: son of Ku; Yao's elder brother succeeded Ku, but he abdicated when found to be an ineffective ruler.
- ◆ Shun: successor of Yao, who passed over his own son and made Shun his successor because of Shun's ability and morality.

These rulers are generally regarded as morally upright and benevolent, examples to be emulated by latter day kings and emperors. Historically, when Qin Shi Huang united China in 221 B.C., he felt that his achievements had surpassed those of all the rulers who had gone before him. He combined the ancient titles of Huáng and Dì to create a new title, Huángdì, which is usually translated as Emperor.

Shun passed on his place as emperor to Yu the Great. The Yellow River, prone to flooding, erupted in a huge flood in the time of Yao. Yu's father, Gun, was put in charge of flood control by Yao, but failed to alleviate the problem after nine years. He was executed by Shun, and Yu took his father's place, leading the people to build canals and levees. After thirteen years of toil, flooding problems were ameliorated under Yu's command. Shun enfeoffed Yu as ruler of the geographic region of origin of the Xia, in present-day Henan.

Upon Yu's death, his position as leader was passed not to his deputy, but rather to his son Qi. Sources differ regarding the process by which Qi rose to this position. Most versions agree that Yu designated his deputy, Gaotao, to be his successor. When Gaotao died before him, Yu then selected Gaotao's son, Bo Yi as his successor. One version holds that all those who had submitted

to Yu admired Qi more than Bo Yi, leading Yu to pass his power to Qi instead. Another version holds that Bo Yi ceremoniously offered the position to Qi, who accepted, against convention, because he had the support of other leaders. Yet another version claims that Qi killed Bo Yi and usurped his position as leader.

The version currently most accepted in China has Yu name Bo Yi as successor because of the fame Bo Yi had achieved teaching people to drive animals with fire during hunts. Bo Yi had the support of the people, which Yu could not easily stand



Yu, The Great (Painted on silk clothing)

against. However, the title Yu had given Bo Yi came without power; Yu gave his own son all the power in managing the country. After a few years, Bo Yi lost popularity, and Yu's son Qi became favored. Yu then named Qi as successor. Bo Yi did not go willingly and challenged Qi for the leadership. A civil war ensued. Qi, with strong support from the people, defeated Bo Yi's forces, killed Bo Yi, and solidified his own rule. Qi's succession broke the previous convention of meritorious succession, and began what is traditionally regarded as the first dynasty of Chinese history. The dynasty is called "Xia" after Yu's center of power. The Xia dynasty is semi-mythological. The Records of the Grand Historian and the Bamboo Annals record the names of 17 kings of the Xia dynasty. However, there is no conclusive archaeological evidence of its capital or its existence as a state of significant size. Some archaeological evidence for a significant urban civilization before the Shang Dynasty exists.

Jie, the last king of the Xia dynasty, was supposedly a bloodthirsty despot. Tribal leader Tang of Shang revolted against Xia rule and eventually overthrew Jie, establishing the Shang dynasty, based in Anyang. Book 5 of the philosopher Mozi described the end of the Xia dynasty and the beginning of the Shang. During the reign of King Jie of Xia, there was a great climatic change. Legends hold that the paths of the sun and moon changed, the seasons became confused, and the five grains dried up. Ghouls cried in the country and cranes shrieked for ten nights. Heaven ordered Shang Tang to receive the heavenly commission from the Xia dynasty, which had failed morally and which Heaven was determined to end. Shang Tang was commanded to destroy Xia with the promise of Heaven's help. In the dark, Heaven destroyed the fortress' pool, and Shang Tang then gained victory easily. The Shang dynasty ruled from c. 1766 B.C. to c. 1050 B.C. It came to an end when the last despotic ruler, Zhou of Shang, was overthrown by the new Zhou dynasty. The end of the Shang dynasty and the establishment of the Zhou is the subject of the influential mythological fiction Investiture of the Gods.

Book 5 of Mozi also described the shift. During the reign of Shang Zhou, Heaven could not endure Zhou's morality and neglect of timely sacrifices. It rained mud for ten days and nights, the nine cauldrons (presumably used in either astronomy or to measure earth movements) shifted positions, pontianaks appeared, and ghosts cried at night. There were women who became men while it rained flesh and thorny brambles, covering the national highways. A red bird brought a message: "Heaven decrees King Wen of Zhou to punish Yin and possess its empire". The Yellow River formed charts and the earth brought forth mythical horses. When King Wu became king, three gods

appeared to him in a dream, telling him that they had drowned Shang Zhou in wine and that King Wu was to attack him. On the way back from victory, the heavens gave him the emblem of a yellow bird. Unlike the preceding Xia dynasty, there is clear archaeological evidence of a government center at Yinxi in Anyang, and of an urban civilization in the Shang dynasty. However, the chronology of the first three dynasties remains an area of active research and controversy.

Chinese mythology holds that the Jade Emperor was charged with running of the three realms: heaven, hell, and the realm of the living. The Jade Emperor adjudicated and meted out rewards and remedies to saints, the living, and the deceased according to a merit system loosely called the Jade Principles Golden Script. When proposed judgments were objected to, usually by other saints, the administration would occasionally resort to the counsels of advisory elders. The Chinese dragon is one of the most important mythical creatures in Chinese mythology, considered to be the most powerful and divine creature as well as controller of all waters. They were believed to be able to create clouds with their breath. The dragon symbolized great power and was very supportive of heroes and gods. One of the most famous dragons in Chinese mythology is Yinglong, said to be the god of rain. Many people in different places pray to Yinglong in order to receive rain. Chinese people sometimes use the term “Descendants of the Dragon” as a sign of their ethnic identity.

There has been extensive interaction between Chinese mythology and Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Elements of pre-Han dynasty mythology such as those in Shan Hai Jing were adapted into these belief systems as they developed (in the case of Taoism), or were assimilated into Chinese culture (in the case of Buddhism). Elements from the teachings and beliefs of these systems became incorporated into Chinese mythology. For example, the Taoist belief of a spiritual paradise became incorporated into mythology as the place where immortals and deities dwelt. In the next chapter, we will have a short glance upon all the well described gods and deities of ancient cultures, who are being lost in the darkness of past.

Dieties of Various Civilizations

At the first, let have a look upon the names and powers of the gods of our ancestors. The Egyptian Gods and Goddesses have been around longer than most cultures. Since roughly 5500 B.C. the people of Northeastern Africa have held the ancient Egyptian gods and goddesses as protectors, guides, and heavenly beings. Similar to the gods and goddesses of other regions, the Egyptian deities cover nearly all aspects of ancient life while their myths cover everything from creation to the afterlife.

Ancient Egyptian Gods and Goddesses

Aah - The god of the 360 day Egyptian calendar. He famously lost the other 5 days to Thoth in a game of dice.

Abtu - A fish deity, paired with Anet. Together they swim in front of Ra's boat to warn and protect him from danger.

Ahti - With the body of a hippo and the head of a wasp, this goddess was considered spiteful and chaotic and was rarely worshipped.

Aken - The ferryman who takes dead souls to the afterlife. Is often asleep, which means souls have to wake him for passage.

Aker - An earth god whose primary function is to protect the gateway into and out of the Underworld.

Amathaunta - Brought to Egypt from Sumerian myth, little is known of this goddess other than that she was associated with the sea.

Amaunet - The goddess of the North Wind in Lower Egypt. Also one of the 8 original gods, the Ogdoad.

Amenhotep - A pharaoh who constructed so many great buildings he became the god of architecture and construction.

Ament - The hostess of the Underworld. Greets new souls brought in by her husband Aken.

Ammit - A goddess of judgement. If one's soul is judged unworthy at the end of their life, this hippo/lion/crocodile goddess swallows it.

Amn - A greeter goddess of the Underworld. Possibly the same deity as Ament, except she is invisible.



Amsit - One of the 4 sons of Horus who protected the mummified remains of the dead. Amsit protected jars of livers.

Amun - One of the 8 Ogdoads (original gods) of Egypt who through time evolved to become the chief deity of all Egyptian mythology.

Amun Ra - The joining of Amun and Ra into one super-deity which occurred later in Egyptian mythology.

Anat - A war goddess brought to Egypt from Mesopotamia. Was also romantically linked to Set.

Andjety - The god of rebirth in the Underworld. Allowed souls to remain alive after their bodies died. Husband of Anit.

Anet - A fish deity, paired with Abtu. Together they swim in front of Ra's boat to warn and protect him from danger.

Anhur - A god of creativity who is best known for slaying the enemies of the Egyptian people.

Anit - Goddess of fertility, sex, war, and hunting. Originally from Canaan but also worshipped by early Hebrews.

Ankhet - Goddess of the Nile, specifically flooding, fertility, and fertilization.

Anouke - An ancient Egyptian war goddess who was always shown with a bow and arrow.

Anti - An ancient god who became the patron god of ferrymen and travellers by sea.

Anubis - The jackal-headed god of Death in early Egyptian mythology. He holds the scales that weigh the souls of the dead.

Apedemak - A little known god of the Meroitic people. He had the head of a lion and was considered a warrior god.

Apep - A god of darkness in the form of a serpent. Would try to swallow sunlight and was the reason for eclipses.

Apis - A holy bull god in Memphis. Any bulls born all black with a white triangle on the forehead were considered him reborn.

Arensnpuphis - A lion headed god of Nubia who wore a crown of feathers. His mythological function is unknown.

Aten - A little known sun god until Pharaoh Amenhotep IV decreed him to be the ONLY god. Also known as the "Sun Disc".

Atum - The creator of the world who began life as a single hill emerging from the water. Created the other gods from his semen.

Ba - A fertility god with a ram's head. Women hoping to get pregnant would invoke his name.

Ba-Pef - A minor Egyptian god whose name means "That Soul". Little is known except that he is often sad and woeful.

Babi - A baboon demon who was considered a god of sexual prowess in the underworld. Rarely wore pants.

Banebdjetet - An Egyptian ram god from Mendes. Intervened in the great war between Horus and Seth. Possibly the same deity as Ba.

Bast - A famous cat-headed goddess who protected Egyptians from foreign attacks as well as fires. Later became known for cat-like sensuality.

Bat - A fertility goddess in the form of a cow. Was known in Upper Egypt.

Benu - A sun god in the form of a golden bird. Is connected to Atum, the creator of the world.

Bes - An ugly, scary looking dwarf god who uses his appearance to ward off evil spirits and vibrations. Commonly invoked for protection.

Beset - Beset is the female version of Bes. Most likely a later spelling of the same name.

Buto - A cobra goddess who protected the pharaohs. Pharaohs would wear a cobra on their crown to invoke her protection.

Chenti-Cheti - A minor Egyptian god who took the form of a crocodile, then later a falcon.

Chenti-Irti - A minor Egyptian god of law and order who took the form of a falcon. Possibly Horus in disguise.

Cherti - Another ferryman of the dead, he took the form of a ram or a man with a ram's head.

Chontamenti - A death god in Western Egypt. Took the form of a dog with horns and lived in the Underworld.

Dedun - God of wealth symbolized by his association with then-precious incense.

Dua - The god of toilets and sanitation.

Duamutef - One of the four sons of Horus who protected embalmed stomachs of mummified corpses. Has a jackal's head.

Ehi - The Egyptian god of the sistrum, a rattle used in sacred ceremonies.

Geb - God of the Earth. Represented by the goose. His laughter caused earthquakes. His twin sister/consort was Nut, the sky goddess.

Ha - The god of deserts west of Egypt. Had a bull's tail.

Hah - God of infinity and formlessness. One of the first Egyptian gods who supports the universe. He himself is the symbol for the number 1,000,000.

Hapi - God of the Nile who appears as a man but pregnant looking, representing his dedication to the fertility provided by the Nile.

Hapy - One of the four sons of Horus who protected embalmed lungs of mummified corpses. Has a baboon's head.

Har-Nedj-Hef - An incarnation of the god Horus, this one dedicated to protecting Osiris in the Underworld.

Har-Pa-Khered - An incarnation of the god Horus, this one as a child sitting on his mother's lap. Was invoked to ward off evil creatures.

Harmakhis - An incarnation of the god Horus, this one appearing as the Sphinx of Giza and representing resurrection identified by the setting and rising sun.

Haroeris - An ancient incarnation of Horus, considered "Horus the Elder", a combination of falcon-headed Horus and Wer, an ancient creation god.

Hat-Mehit - A fish goddess primarily worshipped in the Nile Delta. Her husband was Banebdjetet.

Hathor - The goddess of Happiness, Frolicing, and Cavorting. Was also a protector of women and had a complex history.

Hauhet - Goddess of infinity and formlessness. The female counterpart to Hah.

Hedetet - A little known goddess who took the form of a scorpion.

Heket - An Egyptian goddess of childbirth. Was depicted on temple walls as a woman with a frogs head and on amulets as a frog.

Hemen - A little known Egyptian falcon god.

Hemsut - A goddess of fate.

Henet - A pelican headed goddess who seemed to be linked to one's passing into the afterlife.

Heptet - The goddess who protected Osiris's body and soul in the afterlife. Had the head of a snake and held twin daggers.

Herishep - A minor god in Northern Egypt, he had a ram's head and horns and was associated with fertility.

Heru-Behudti - Horus in the form of the scorching sun.

Hez-Ur - A little known Egyptian baboon god.

Heka - God of magic and magical rituals. Son of the Egyptian creator god Atum.

Horus - The great Egyptian sky god whose eyes were the sun and the moon. Son of Isis and Osiris and nephew of Seth.

Iat - A minor goddess of milk, childbirth, and nursing.

Ihy - God of music and dancing.

Imentet - An ancient Egyptian goddess who welcomed the deceased to the afterlife in Western Egypt.

Imhotep - A mortal commoner whose brilliance in sculpture, architecture, and mathematics helped him ascend to the rank of a god.

Imiut - An ancient Egyptian god whose name means "He who is in his wrappings". May have been connected with the Underworld.

Iptet - A goddess of childbirth who took on the form of a hippopotamus.

Isis - An extremely popular goddess, originally protected sailors but then became the Great Mother Goddess after giving birth to Horus.

Jah - (a.k.a. Joh) A god of the moon.

Kebechet - The goddess of embalming fluid used in mummification.

Kebechsenef - One of the four sons of Horus. He would protect the intestinal remains of the mummified.

Kek - The great unknown darkness in Egyptian mythology. Took male form as a frog-man and female form as a snake-woman.

Kemur - An oracular deity taking the form of a pure black bull in the Mnevis region.

Ken - An Egyptian love goddess.

Khepri - The god of resurrection. Symbolized by the scarab (dung beetle), which became a representation of resurrection itself.

Khnum - He is where babies come from according to the ancient Egyptians. He would make a baby's body out of clay then sneak into a woman's home and impregnate her with it.

Khons - A brilliant young moon god who also was a god of time. Also an exorcist of sorts.

Kneph - One of the first Egyptian gods who is known to be connected to the creation of the universe.

Maat - Goddess of Justice and Law.

Mafdet - Egyptian goddess of Protection.

Mahe - A lion-headed god of war. Possibly the Eastern Egyptian version of Apedemak.

Mehen - A large snake god who protectively coils around Ra during the night.

Mehurt - The mother of the sky in Egyptian mythology. Takes form as a cow and represents the flowing water of life.

Menhit - Warrior goddess with the head of a lion and a lust for war. The female version of Mahe.

Monthu - A popular war god in Ancient Egypt. Mostly seen as a falcon-headed man, but occasionally as a white bull with a black face.

Meret - Goddess of Rejoicing. Presided over song and dance and was often considered the wife of Hapy.

Meretseger - Cobra-headed goddess who was both dangerous and merciful. She protected the Valley of the Kings and laid waste to graverobbers.

Meskenet - An important goddess of childbirth who breathed the soul into each child as they were born.

Min - The god of male fertility and sexual prowess and potency, once called the Chief of Heaven.

Mnewer - A sacred black bull worshipped in Heliopolis. Was considered an aspect of sun god Atum-Ra and represented virility.

Mut - Mother goddess of nurturing and protecting, she was depicted as a vulture - which ancient Egyptians believed to be excellent parents.

Nephthys - Could be called the "goddess of sympathy". Comforts both the living and dead after a person has died. Sister of Isis and Osiris.

Nef - A serpent god.

Nefertem - Was born from a blue lotus flower at the beginning of creation. Created mankind from his tears.

Nehebkau - Protects against poisonous snake bites and scorpion stings. Also binds the souls (Ba and Ka) after death.

Neith - A goddess of war, hunting, and wisdom. Was very wise and was said to be the mother of Ra.

Nekhbet - Patron goddess of the city of Nekheh, and seen as an "adoptive mother" in Egyptian myth. Depicted as a white vulture.

Neper - A god of grain and corn. Paired with the goddess Nepit.

Nepit - A goddess of grain and corn. Paired with the god Neper.

Nun - God of primeval and stormy waters. Was one of the 8 Ogdoad (early gods) of Hermopolis. His wife is Nunet.

Nunet - Goddess of the skies above stormy waters. Was one of the 8 Ogdoad (early gods) of Hermopolis. Her husband is Nun.

Nut - Goddess of the sky. One of the oldest and most prominent goddesses. Portrayed as a nude woman covered in stars.

Osiris - Former god of vegetation and fertility until he was killed by his brother and ressurected by his sister. Now the Judge of the Dead.

Petbe - The Egyptian god of revenge.

Ptah - The crafting god who covered all sorts of industry - masonry, craftsmanship, carpentry, sculpture, metalworking, and shipbuilding.

Qetesh - A goddess of fertility, representing sacred ecstasy and sexual pleasure.

Ra - The great sun god. Often considered the most important deity in Egyptian mythology.

Renenet - Goddess of Prosperity. An important cobra-headed goddess associated with motherhood, the harvest, and the magical properties of linen for mumification.

Renpet - Goddess of youth and the spring season.

Reshep - Originally known by the Syrians as Ramman, this storm god became an Egyptian war god. Associated with Min and Qadesh.

Sahu - The Egyptian incarnation of the constellation Orion. A star god associated with the change between night and day.

Satet - The Egyptian goddess associated with flooding the Nile River - the key source of life in ancient Egypt.

Sebek - The deification of the power of the Egyptian pharaohs. He was associated with the Nile river and had the head of a crocodile.

Seker - Falcon god of death and ressurection. Shown as a mummified falcon or hawk. Associated with gods Ptah and Osiris.

Sekhmet - An important, multi-faceted goddess of war, healing, and the desert. Depicted as a woman with the head of a lioness.

Sepa - The god who protected dead bodies from insects. Most often seen in the form of a venomous centipede.

Serket - The goddess protector against poisonous animal bites and stings. She wore a scorpion crown.

Seshat - Her name means "She Who Is A Scribe". This goddess of knowledge, wisdom, and writing is the record keeper of the gods.

Sesmu - A minor "demonic" god of slaughter. He also embodied blood, wine, pressed oils, and perfumes.

Set - One of the major gods, representing violence, chaos, and evil, as well as storms, the desert, and foreign wars. Famously killed his own brother Osiris.

Shai - The gender-changing god of fate (see Shait). Often seen paired with Renenet (fortune) as the "hands of Toth" - the divine knowledge of the gods.

Shait - The feminine incarnation of Shai (as a goddess rather than as a god).

Shed - He is the god of salvation, tied to Horus in the form of "Horus the Child".

Shesmetet - An ancient Egyptian goddess from the land of "Punt" - a close foreign trading neighbor. Possibly an incarnation of Sekhmet or Bastet.

Shu - A very ancient Egyptian god of air, father of Nut and Geb (the sky and earth, respectively), and pacifier of the winds and the earth.

Sopdet - Goddess of the star Sirius - the brightest in the night sky - which also represented the upcoming flooding of the Nile.

Sopdu - A god of war and the sky god of eastern Egypt. Protected Egypt from foreign attacks from the East and by the Red Sea.

Sphinx - With a human head and the body of a lion, the great Egyptian statue is dedicated to the very same figure from Greek mythology.

Tatenen - A Memphis god who was associated with creation from the primordial mounds of the Earth.

Taweret - An important goddess of Maternity and Childbirth she took the form of a pregnant hippopotamus.

Tefen - A male associate of Tefnut who helped with the weighing of the hearts of the dead.

Tefnut - The goddess of moisture in Egyptian myth. She consorted with Shu, the air god to create rain and humidity.

Toth - One of the most powerful and heralded gods in Egyptian mythology. Said to have created himself, and then created the Universe.

Tutu - A unique monster god who protected the Egyptian people from demons, ill-willed gods, and later dreams and nightmares.

Un Nefer - A name for either Osiris, Horus, or Ra (depending on who you ask) that refers to one of their roles judging and preparing the dead.

Unut - A rare, rabbit-headed goddess who symbolized birth and fertility. Formerly took the form of a swift-moving snake.

Wadj Wer - A somewhat androgynous god who represents the fertility of water and land, personified by the flooding of the Nile.

Wadjet - A snake goddess often worshipped along with Bast, she protected pharaohs and pregnant women in cities who worshipped her.

Weneg - A sky and death god who could be invoked via a spell via the Pyramid Texts.

Wepawet - A war deity in the form of a wolf. He was first known as a scout, then as one who opened the way to victory, then to the afterlife.

Wosyet - A guardian goddess of Thebes whose name means "The Powerful".

Norse Gods & Goddesses:-

Aesir :- Principal race of gods in Norse mythology.

Andhrimnir :- The cook of the Aesir.

Angrboda :- Goddess and wife of Loki

Astrild :- Goddess of love.

Atla :- Water goddess.

Audhumla :- The primeval cow, formed from the melting ice.

Balder :- Fairest of the gods

Beyla :- The servant of Freyr.

Borghild :- Goddess of the evening mist or moon, she slays the sun each evening.

Bragi :- God of poets and the patron of all skaldi (poets) in Norse culture.

Brono :- The son of Balder. He is the god of daylight.

Bylgia :- Water goddess.

Dagur :- The personification of day, he drives the day chariot across the sky.

Disen :- A group of goddess in old Norse mythology. Called the "Dis of the Vanir".

Eir :- Goddess of healing and shamanic healers, companion of the goddess Frigg

Elli :- Goddess of old age.

Fenrir :- Also known as Fenris. The great wolf, child of Loki and Angrboda

Forseti :- God of justice who settles court disputes in his gilded hall.

Freja :- Goddess of love, beauty and sensuality.

Freyr :- God of fertility, sun and rain.

Frigg :- Wife of Odin and the goddess of marriage and fertility.

Gefion :- Goddess of agriculture and the plough.

Gerd:- The wife of Freyr and a goddess of fertility. She is the personification of the fertile soil.

Heimdall:- God of light and protection.

Hel:- The goddess of death and ruler of the realm of the dead.

Hermod:- The messenger of the gods. Often equated to the Greek god Hermes.

Hod:- Blind god of darkness and winter.

Holler :- God of disease and destruction.

Idun:- Goddess of the spring, eternal youth and the keeper of the golden apples

Jord:- Goddess of the primitive and unpopulated earth.

Jormungand:- The Midgard Serpent

Kari:- Leader of the storm giants.

Kvasir:- The wisest of the Vanir gods.

Laga:- Goddess of wells and springs.

Lofn:- Goddess of forbidden love, who blesses all illicit love affairs.

Loki:- Trickster god of the Norse, concerned with thievery, magic and fire.

Magni:- Son of Thor and god of brute strength.

Mani:- God of the moon and brother of the sun goddess Sol.

Miming:- Minor forest god.

Mimir:- Wisest god of the Aesir, sent in a hostage trade to the rival Vanir gods.

Modi:- God of battle wrath, he was the leader of the berserkers.

Njord:- God of the sea, wind and fire. He bestows good fortune to those on the sea.

Norns:- The triple goddesses of fate and destiny.

Nott:- Goddess of night who mans the night-charion in it's track through the sky.

Odin:-The chief god of the Aesir and most important of the Norse deities.

Ran:- Goddess of storms and the drowned dead.

Saga:- Goddess of poetry and history.

Sif:- Wife of Thor, and possibly an ancient fertility goddess.

Sjofn:- Goddess of love, passion and marital harmony.

Skadi:- A frost giant and goddess of winter.

Sleipnir:-The eight-legged horse of Odin

Sol:- Goddess of the sun, who guides the sun-chariot through the sky.

Syn:- Goddess of watchfulness and truth.

Thor:- Thunder-god and the protector of men and gods.

Tyr:- The original god of war in the Germanic culture

Ull:- God of justice and duelling, archery and skiing.

Vali:- Son of Odin, and the god born to avenge the death of Balder.

Valkyries:- The battle-maidens, who choose the best warriors

Vanir:- A group of fertility and nature gods
Var:- Goddess of contracts and marriage agreements.

Vidar:- Son of Odin and the god of silence and vengeance.

CELTIC GODS & GODDESSES :-

Airmid :- Celtic Goddess of Healing, Medicine, and Spring. Brings the dead back to life

Artio :- Celtic Goddess of the Wild.

Balor :- Celtic Goddess with a venomous eye. Good on the battlefield

Branwen :- Celtic Goddess of Love and Beauty

Camalus :- Celtic God of the Sky and War

Cerunnos :- Celtic God of Fertility, Life, Animals, Wealth, and the Underworld

Cyhiraeth :- Celtic Goddess of Streams

Druantia :- Queen of the Druids. Protector of Trees, Knowledge, Creativity, Passion, Sex, & Fertility

Giobhniu :- Celtic God of Weaponry

Lugh :- Celtic God of Druids, Carpentry, and Mason

Llyr :- Celtic God of Waters and Sea

Maeve :- Celtic Goddess of Earth, Fertility, and War

Manannan :- Celtic God of Sailors and Merchants

Margawse :- Celtic Goddess of Mothers

Mebd :- Celtic Goddess of War and Drinking

Mider :- Celtic God of the Underworld

Morrigan :- Celtic Goddess of War, Death, Ravens, Fertility, the Dark Goddess, and Fate

Nemain :- Celtic Goddess of Panic and War

Aine :- Irish Celtic Goddess of Love and Fertility

Angus Og :- Irish Celtic God of Beauty

Anu :- Irish Celtic Goddess of Manifestation Magick, Moon, Air, Fertility, and Prosperity

Babd Catha :- Irish Celtic Goddess of War

Bel :- Irish Celtic God of Fire and Sun

Bran :- Irish Celtic God of Health

Brigid :- Irish Celtic Goddess of Fire and Water. One of the triple Goddesses

Bris :- Irish Celtic God of Fertility and Agriculture

Dagda:- Irish Celtic God of the Earth, and father God. Leader of the Tuatha de Danaan.

Danu :- Irish Celtic Goddess of Rivers, Water, Wells, Prosperity, Magick, and Wisdom

Diancecht :- Irish Celtic God of Healing and Medicine

Flidais :- Irish Celtic Goddess of Nature, Forests, Woodlands, and Wild Things

Labraid :- Irish Celtic God of the Underworld

Macha :- Irish Celtic Goddess of Beauty and Brightness

Niamh :- Irish Celtic Goddess of Beauty and Brightness

Arawn :- Welsh Celtic God of the Underworld, Terror, Revenge, and War

Arianrhod :- Welsh Celtic Goddess of Air, Reincarnation, Full Moons, Karma, and Retribution

Amaethon :- Welsh Celtic God of Husbandry, Agriculture, and Luck.

Blodeuwedd :- Welsh Celtic Goddess of Wisdom, Moon Mysteries, and Initiations.

Cerridwen :- Welsh Celtic Goddess of the Moon, Poetry, Music, Luck, Earth, Death, Fertility.

Dewi :- Welsh Celtic God of Dragons.

Don :- Welsh Celtic Goddess of the Heavens, Air, Sea, and the Moon.

Dylan :- Welsh Celtic God of the SEA

Elaine :- Welsh Celtic Maiden Goddess.

Gwydion :- Welsh Celtic God of Warriors and Magic.

Gwynn Ap Nudd: - Welsh Celtic God of the Underworld

Math Ap: - Welsh Celtic God of Magic, Sorcery, and Enchantment.

Mathowny: - Welsh Celtic God of Druids, Magic, and Sorcery. He is also known as Merlin.

Name of God	Country/Culture	God or Goddess
Agasaya	Semitic	goddess
Ah Chuy Kak	Maya	god
Ah Cun Can	Maya	god
Ah Hulneb	Maya	god
Ahulane	Maya	god
Anahita	Persian	goddess
Anath	Semitic	goddess
Andraste	Celtic	goddess
Ankt	Egypt	goddess
Anouke	Egypt	goddess
Aray	Armenia	god
Ares	Greece	god
Ashur	Assyria	god
Athena	Greece	goddess
Badb	Celtic	goddess
Beg-Tse	Tibet	god
Belatu-Cadros	Celtic	god
Bellona	Rome	goddess

Name of God	Country/Culture	God or Goddess
Bishamon	Japan	god
Bugid Y Aiba	Haiti	god
Buluc Chabtan	Maya	god
Burijas	Kassites	god
Camaxtli	Aztec	god
Camulus	Gaul	god
Cariocienus	Hispanic	god
Caswallawn	Celtic	god
Chemosh	Moabite	god
Dev	Persia	god
Donar	Teutonic	god
Ekchuah	Maya	god
Enyalius	Sparta	god
Enyo	Greece	goddess
Erra	Babylonia	god
Eshara	Chaldean	goddess
Futsu-Nushi-No-Kami	Japan	god
Gu	Dahomey	god
Guan-Di	Taoist	god
Gun	Africa	god
Hachiman	Shinto	god
Hadur	Hungary	god
Huitzilopochtli	Aztec	god
Ictinike	Native American	god
Inanna	Sumer	goddess
Irmin	Teutonic	god
Jarovit	Slavic	god
Korrawi	Tamil	goddess
Kukailimoku	Hawaiian	god
Laran	Etruscan	god
Mars	Rome	god
Maru	Polynesian/Maori	god
Menhit	Egypt	goddess
Menthu	Egypt	god

Name of God	Country/Culture	God or Goddess
Mentu	Egypt	god
Mextli	Mexico	god
Minerva	Rome	goddess
Mixcoatl	Aztec	god
Morrigan	Celtic	goddess
Murukan	Tamil	god
Nacon	Maya	god
Nanaja	Sumer	goddess
Neith	Egypt	goddess
Ninurta	Babylonia	god
Ogoun	Haiti	god
Oro	Tahiti	god
Resef	Phoenician	god
Reshep	Syria	god
Rugiviet	Slavic	god
Sakhmet	Egypt	goddess
Samulayo	Fiji	god
Segomo	Gaul	god
Septu	Egypt	god
Seth	Egypt	god
Svantetrit	Slavic	god
Svetovit	Slavic	god
Ah Cun Can	Maya	god
Teutates	Celtic	god
Triglav	Slavic	god
Tu	Polynesian	god
Tu Matauenga	Polynesian	god
Turris	Finland	god
Tyr	Germanic	god
Wepwawet	Egypt	god
Wurukatte	Hittite	god
Zababa	Akkad	god
Zroya	Slavonic	goddess

GODS & GODDESSES OF LOVE & SEXUALITY		
Name	Origin	Attribute
Achtland	Celtic goddess	of Wanton love
Aedos	Roman goddess	of Modesty
Aeval	Celtic goddess	of Sexual relations/Small size
Aidin	Celtic goddess	of Love/Sexuality
Aine	Irish goddess	of Fertility/Love
Aisha Qandisha	Morocco goddess	of Sexual activity
AIZEN MYO-O	Japanese God	of Love and Lust
Ala	Nigerian goddess	of Fertility/Morality
Alalahe	Polynesian goddess	of Love
ALBINA	Etruscan goddess	of dawn and protector of ill-fated lovers
Al-Lat	Arabic goddess	of Fertility/Procreation
AlpanAlpan	Etruscan goddess	of Love
Ame-No-Uzume	Japanese goddess	of Fertility
Amon	Egyptian god	of Fertility
Amor	Roman god	of Love
Anahita	Persian goddess	of Fertility/Semen
Anath	Canaanite goddess	of Love
Angus Og	Irish god	of Love
Annallja Tu Bari	Sudanese goddess	of Sexuality
Anna Perenna	Etruscan goddess	of Reproduction/Wanton/Love
Anteros	Greek god	of Love/Passion
Antheia	Greek goddess	of Love, Flowers
Aphrodite	Greek goddess	of Fertility/Sexual love/Beauty
Apis	Egyptian god	of Fertility
Arianrhod	Welsh goddess	of Fertility/Wanton love
Artemis	Greek goddess	of Chastity/Virginity/Fertility
Asase Yaa	Ashanti goddess	of Fertility
Asherali	Canaanite goddess	of Fertility
Ashtoreth	Phoenician goddess	of Fertility
Ashur	Assyrian god	of Fertility
Astarte	Phoenician goddess	of Fertility/Love/Sacred sexuality/Sex
Astlik	Armenian goddess	of Love, Fertility
Astraea	Greek goddess	of Modesty
Astrild	Norse god	of Erotic Love
Athtart	Canaanite goddess	of Fertility
Auseklis	Latvian goddess	of Love
Baal	Syrian/Canaanite god	of Fertility

Name	Origin	Attribute
Backlum Chaam	Mayan god	of Male sexuality/Sex
Bangan	Philippine goddess	of Love
Bastet	Egyptian goddess	of Fertility/Love/Sex
Bau	Sumerian goddess	of Fertility
BEBHIONN	Irish goddess	of Love/Pleasure; Queen of the Underworld
Benten	Japanese goddess	of Love
Bes	Egyptian god	of Love/Marriage
Bidhgoe	Celtic goddess	of Love/Sexuality
Bintang	Borneo goddess	of Love
Boann	Irish goddess	of Fertility
Brag-srin-mo	Tibetan goddess	of Fertility
Brangwaine	Welsh goddess	of Love
Branwen	Irish goddess	of Love
Brigit	Irish goddess	of Fertility
Ca-the-na	Mohave goddess	of Love
Ceres	Roman goddess	of Fertility
Cernunnos	Celtic god	of Fertility
Cerridwen	Celtic goddess	of Fertility
Chac	Mayan god	of Fertility
Chalchiuhtlicue	Aztec goddess	of Love/Beauty
Chicomecoatl	Aztec goddess	of Fertility
Chou Wang	Chinese god	of Sodomy
Cinteotl	Aztec god	of Fertility
CLIODHNA	Irish goddess	of Love and Beauty; queen of the Munster fairies
Conchenn	Celtic goddess	of Love
Cotys	Thracian goddess	of Fertility
Cupid	Roman god	of Erotic Love
Cythera	Greek/Cyprian goddess	of Love
Demeter	Greek goddess	of Fertility
Diana	Roman goddess	of Chastity/Virginity/Fertility
Dumuzi	Babylonian god	of Fertility
DWYN/ DWUMWEN	Welsh god	of Love
Dzydzilelya	Polish goddess	of Love
El	Canaanite god	of Fertility
Enki	Sumerian god	of Fertility
Eros	Greek god	of Erotic love/Passion/Sex

Name	Origin	Attribute
Erzulie	Voodoo goddess	of Fertility/Love/Virginity/Beauty/Sex
Eueucoyotl	Aztec god	of Fertility/Sex
Ezili	Fon goddess	of Beauty/Love
Faumea	Polynesian goddess	of Fertility
Faunus	Roman god	of Fertility
Finncaeiv	Irish goddess	of Fair love
Flora	Roman goddess	of Love/Prostitution
Frey	Scandinavian god	of Fertility
Freya	Norse goddess	of Fertility/Love/Beauty/Sex/War
Freyr	Norse god	of Phallic Fertility
Frigg	Germanic goddess	of Fertility/Marriage
Gefjon	Germanic goddess	of of Fertility
Gekka-O	Japanese god	of Marriage
Ghede	Voodoo god	of Fertility/Love
Hathor	Egyptian goddess	of Fertility/Love/Marriage/Beauty
Haumea	Hawaiian goddess	of Fertility
Havea lolo fonua	Polynesian goddess	of Intercourse
Hebe	Greek goddess	of Beauty
Hecate	Greek goddess	of Fertility
Hera	Greek goddess	of Marriage/Motherhood
Hestia	Greek goddess	of Marriage
HIMERUS	Greek God	of Love/Sexual Desire
Hina	Hawaiian goddess	of Fertility
Hora	Roman goddess	of Beauty
Hsi Shih	Chinese goddess	of Face cream
HUEHUECOYOTL	Aztec god	of Music/Dance/Song
Hymen	Greek/Roman god	of Marriage/First love
HYMENAIOS	Greek god	Marriage Ceremonies/Inspiring Feasts/Songs
Ichpuchtli	Aztec goddess	of Lust/Pleasure
Inanna	Mesopotamian goddess	of Fertility/Love
Inemes	Micronesian goddess	of Love/Sexuality
Ishkhara	Babylonian goddess	of Love, Priestess of Ishtar
Ishtar	Assyrian goddess	of Fertility/Love/Sex
Isis	Egyptian goddess	of Fertility/Marital/Devotion/Motherhood
Ix Chel	Mayan goddess	of Sexual relations

Name	Origin	Attribute
Juno	Roman goddess	of Marriage/Motherhood
Kama	Hindu god	of Love
Kane	Hawaiian god	of Fertility
Kanikanihia	Hawaiian goddess	of Love
Kapo	Hawaiian goddess	of Abortions/Fertility
Ken	Egyptian goddess	of Love
Khem	Egyptian god	of Fertility
Kilya	Inca goddess	of Marriage
Kishi-Mojin	Japanese goddess	of Motherhood
Kokopell'Mana	Hopi goddess	of Fertility
Korawini?i	Paiute goddess	of Intercourse
Kupalo	Slavic goddess	of Fertility/Sex
Kurukulla	Tibetan goddess	of Love, Wealth
Lada	Slavic goddess	of Love
Lempo	Finnish god	of Frenzied Love
Liber	Italian god	of Fertility
Lofn	Scandinavian goddess	of Love
Luamerava	African goddess	of Sexual desire
Lulong	Borneo goddess	of Love
Lutinus	Roman god	of Fertility
Macha	Irish goddess	of Fertility
Maia	Roman goddess	of Fertility
MAMI WATA	African goddess	of Fortune/Healing/Sex/Water
Manannan	Celtic god	of Fertility
Mariana	Brazilian goddess	of Love
Matronit	Spanish goddess	of Chastity/Promiscuity/Motherhood
Medb	Celtic goddess	of Sexuality/Intoxication
Mens	Roman goddess	of Menstruation
Mhaya	Tanzania goddess	of Deserted lovers
MILDA	Lithuanian goddess	of Love
Min	Egyptian god	of Potency/Fertility
Morongu	Zimbabwe goddess	of Love/Sexuality
Mot	Canaanite god	of Fertility
Mut	Egyptian goddess	of Fertility
Myllitta	Babylonian goddess	of Fertility
Naamah	Canaanite goddess	of Fertility/Sex
Nambi	Masai goddess	of Love/Sexuality
Ndauthina	Fijian god	of Adultery
Nehalennia	Germanic goddess	of Fertility

Name	Origin	Attribute
Ninhursaga	Sumerian goddess	of Fertility
Njord	Norse god	of Fertility
Nu Wa	Chinese goddess	of Marriage Arranger
Oba	Yoruba goddess	of Protector of prostitutes
Odudua	Yoruba goddess	of Fertility/Love
Oenghus	Irish god	of Love
Ops	Roman goddess	of Fertility
Oshun Ana	Yoruba goddess	of Love
Osiris	Egyptian god	of Fertility
Pachamama	Incan goddess	of Fertility
Pacha Mama	Aztec goddess	of Fertility
PAN	Greek god	of Male Virility and Sexuality
P'an Chin-lien	Chinese goddess	of Brothels/Lasciviousness/ Prostitution/Sex
Pantang Mayang	Borneo goddess	of Love
PEITHO	Greek goddess	of Persuasion/Seduction
Peko	Estonian god	of Fertility
Prende	Slavic goddess	of Love
Priapus	Greek god	of Fertility
Pudicitia	Roman goddess	of Modesty
Qadesh	Syrian goddess	of Sacred Love, Pleasure
Qadshu	Syrian goddess	of Fertility
Qetesh	Egyptian goddess	of Sex
Quan Yin	Chinese goddess	of Fertility
Quetzalcoatl	Aztec god	of Fertility
Rangda	Balinese goddess	of Fertility/Sexuality/Lust
Rati	Hindu/Balinese goddess	of Fertility/Love/Passion/Sex
Ratu-Mai-Mbula	Fijian god	of Fertility
Rhea	Greek goddess	of Fertility
Rod	Slavic god	of Fertility
Satis	Egyptian goddess	of Fertility
Selket	Egyptian goddess	of Fertility
Sessrumnir	Germanic goddess	of Fertility
Sif	Norse goddess	of Fertility
Sjofn	Norse goddess	of Love/Passion
Suadela	Roman goddess	of Persuasion in Love/Romance/ Seduction
Sukkamielli	Finnish goddess	of Frenzied love

Name	Origin	Attribute
Tagabayan	Philippine goddess	of Adultery/Incest
Taka rita	Polynesian goddess	of Adultery
Tammuz	Mesopotamian god	of Fertility
Tane	Polynesian god	of Fertility
Taueret	Egyptian goddess	of Fertility
Tellus	Roman goddess	of Fertility
Tenye Te'en	Nigerian goddess	of Marital fidelity
Thalia	Greek goddess	of Burlesque
Thunor	Germanic god	of Fertility
Tlazolteotl	Aztec goddess	of Love/Licentiousness/Sex
Tsilah Wedo	Haitian goddess	of Beauty
Turan	Etruscan goddess	of Love/Vitality
Ueuecoyotl	Aztec god	of Fertility
Ursule	Haitian goddess	of Love
Ururupuin	Micronesian goddess	of Flirting
Var	Norse goddess	of Marriage Vows
Venus	Roman goddess	of Love
Vesta	Roman goddess	of Marriage
Voluptas	Roman goddess	of Sensual Pleasure
Xipe Totec	Aztec goddess	of Fertility
XOCHIPILLI	Aztec god	of Love/Games/Beauty/Dance/ Flowers/Maize/Song
Xochiquetzal	Aztec goddess	of Fertility/Love/Sensual Pleasure/ Sex
Xtabay	Mayan goddesses	of Seduction
Yarilo	Slavic god	of Fertility
Zizilia	Polish goddess	of Love
Zoria	Slavic goddess	of Beauty

☐ JAPANESE GODS & GODDESSES

Aizen-Myoo	God of love, worshipped by prostitutes, landlords, singers and musicians.
Aji-Suki-Taka-Hi-Kone	God of thunder.
Ama-No-Minaka-Nushi	'Divine Lord of the Middle Heavens' and god of the Pole Star.
Amaterasu	Shinto goddess of the sun and the leader of the Shinto pantheon.
Amatsu Mikaboshi	God of evil, his name means "August Star of Heaven".

Amatsu-Kami	Gods of heaven who live 'above' the earthly plain. Heavenly and eternal.
Ama-Tsu-Mara	Shinto god of smiths. He is pictured as a Cyclops.
Ame-No-Mi-Kumari	Shinto water goddess.
Ame-No-Wakahiko	God sent to rule the earth. Killed by the sky god Takami-Musubi.
Amida	God of death, to whom the devout turned at the moment of their death.
Am-No-Tanabata-Hime	Goddess of weavers.
Baku	A good spirit, known as the 'eater of dreams'.
Benten	Goddess of love, the arts, wisdom, poetry, good fortune and water.
Benzai-Ten	See Benten.
Bimbogami	God of poverty. Rituals are performed to get rid of him.
Binzuru-Sonja	God of curing illness and good vision.
Bishamon	God of war, justice and protector of the law. He is one of the Shichi Fukujin
Bosatsu	Manifestation of the Buddha in the past, present or future. See bodhisattva.
Butsu	See Buddha.
Chien-shin	A kami which is related to particular geographical area
Chimata-no-kami	Go of crossroads, highways and footpaths. He was originally a phallic god
Chup-Kamui	Sun goddess of the Ainu. She was originally the moon goddess
Daibosatsu	The Great bodhisattva or the Buddha in his last incarnation.
Daikoku	God of wealth, the soil and patron of farmers.
Dainichi	Buddhist personification of purity and wisdom.
Dosojin	God of roads.
Dozoku-shin	Ancestral kami of a dozoku, or clan.
Ebisu	God of the wealth of the sea, he is the patron god of fishermen and fishing.
Ekibiogami	God of plagues and epidemics.

Emma-o	Japanese Buddhist god of the underworld. He is the judge of the dead
Fudo	God of fire and wisdom, god of Astrology.
Fujin	Shinto god of the wind. Seen as a terrifying dark demon in a leopard skin
Fukurokuju	Shinto god of wisdom, luck and prosperity.
Funadama	The boat-spirit, goddess who protects and helps mariners and fishermen.
Futsu-Nushi-no-Kami	God of fire and lightning, a war god and general of Ameratsu.
Gama	God of longevity.
Gekka-o	God of marriage. He binds the feet of lovers with a red silken cord.
Hachiman	God of war and agriculture, divine protector of the Japanese people.
Haniyasu-hiko	God of the earth.
Haniyasu-hime	Goddess of the earth.
Haya-Ji	God of the whirlwind.
Hiruko	God of the morning sun. Guards the health of little children.
Hoso-no-Kami	God of smallpox.
Hotei	God of happiness, laughter and the wisdom of being content.
Ida-Ten	Buddhist god of the law and of monasteries. A handsome young man.
Ika-Zuchi-no-Kami	Group of even Shinto demons who reside in the Underworld.
Iki-Ryo	The spirit of anger and envy which harms.
Inari	Both a male and female deity, god/goddess of rice and agriculture.
Isora	God of the seashore.
Izanagi	Primordial god of the sky and the creator of everything good and right.
Izanami	Primordial goddess of the earth and darkness.
Jinushigami	Minor deity who watches over a town or plot of land.
Jizo	Japanese Buddha of great compassion.

Juichimen	Buddhist god of mercy.
Jurojin	Shinto god of longevity and a happy old age. One of the Shichi Fukujin
Kagutsuchi	Japanese god of fire.
Kamado-gami	Gods of the hearth.
Kami-kaze	God of wind, storms and viscous cold weather.
Kaminari	Goddess of thunder, the Thunder Queen and the Heavenly Noise.
Kanayama-hiko	God of metals.
Kanayama-hime	Goddess of metals.
Kawa-no-Kami	God of rivers. Although rivers had their own god, ruler of all rivers.
Kenro-Ji-Jin	God of earth.
Kishi-Bojin	Goddess of children and childbirth
Kishijoten	Goddess of luck and beauty
Kishimo-jin	Buddhist goddess of compassion and protectress of children.
Kojin	Ancient tree deity and goddess of the kitchen. She lives in an enoki tree.
Ko-no-Hana	The Blossom Princess, she is the goddess of spring
Koshin	God of the roads.
Koya-no-Myoin	God of the sacred Mount Koya
Kukunochi-no-Kami	Shinto god of the trees.
Kuni-Toko-tachi	Earth deity who lives in Mt. Fuji.
Kura-Okami	God of rain and snow.
Marisha-Ten	Queen of heaven, goddess of the light, sun and moon.
Mawaya-no-kami	Kami, or deity of the toilet
Miro	Japanese name for Maitreya.
Miyazu-Hime	Goddess of royalty.
Monju-Bosatsu	Japanese Buddhist bosatsu of wisdom and knowledge.
Musubi-no-Kami	God of love and marriage. Appears as a handsome young lover.

Nai-no-Kami	God of earthquakes.
Naka-Yama-Tsu-Mi	God of mountain slopes.
Nikko-Bosatsu	Buddhist god of sunshine and good health.
Ninigi-no-mikoto	Rice god and ancestral god of the Japanese imperial family.
Nominosukune	God of wrestling.
Nyorai	Japanese name for all of the Buddha's appearances.
Oanomochi	God of the crater of Mt. Fuji.
Ohonamochi	A god of the earth.
Oho-Yama	The great mountain god.
Okuni-Nushi	God of magic and medicine, ruler of the unseen things and the spirit world.
Owatatsumi	God of the sea.
Oyamatsumi	A god of the mountains
Raiden	God of thunder and lightning
Ryo-Wo	God of the sea. known as the Dragon King
Sae-no-Kami	A group of kami, or deities, who guard the roads of Japan.
Sambo-kojin	God of the kitchen. Pictured with three faces and two pairs of hands.
Sarutahiko Ohkami	God of crossroads, paths and overcoming obstacles.
Sengen	See Ko-no-Hana.
Shaka	The silent sage, the wisest and first appearance of Buddha on earth.
Shichi Fujukin	Gods of Luck: Bente, Bishamon, Daikoku, Ebisu, Fukurokuju, Hotei
Shinda	Ainu fertility god of the island of Hokkaido.
Shine-Tsu-Hiko	God of the wind, he fills the space between heaven and earth.
Shoki	God of the afterlife and exorcism.
Suijin	Deity of the water.
Suitengu	Child god of the sea.
Sukuna-Biko	Dwarf god of healing, agriculture and hot springs.

Susanowa	God of the winds, storms, ocean and snakes in Shinto mythology.
Takami-Musubi	Primordial sky god and creator of living things in Shinto belief.
Takemikadzuchi	A thunder god.
Taki-Tsu-Hiko	God of rain.
Tatsuta-hime	Goddess of autumn.
Tenjin	God of learning, language and calligraphy. He taught humans to write.
Toyo-Uke-Bime	Goddess of earth, food and agriculture.
Toyoke-Omikami	Goddess of grain.
Tsuki-Yumi	God of the moon and brother of the sun goddess Ameratsu.
Uba	Spirit of the pine tree. Means 'old woman' or 'wet nurse'.
Uga-Jin	Serpent god of the waters and fertility of the earth.
Uga-no-Mitama	Goddess of agriculture.
Ukemochi	Goddess of fertility and food.
Uzume	Shinto goddess of joy and happiness.
Wakahiru-me	Goddess of the rising sun.
Wata-tsu-mi	God of the sea.
Yabune	Japanese house god.
Yama-no-kami	Goddess of the hunt, forest, agriculture and vegetation.
Yamato	The soul or spirit of Japan.
Yuki-Onna	The Snow Queen or goddess of winter.

Important deities and mythological figures

Ksitigarbha is a bodhisattva primarily revered in East Asian Buddhism and usually depicted as a Buddhist monk. His name may be translated as "Earth Treasury", "Earth Store", "Earth Matrix", or "Earth Womb". Ksitigarbha is known for his vow to take responsibility for the instruction of all beings in the six worlds between the death of Gautama Buddha and the rise of Maitreya, as well as his vow not to achieve Buddhahood until all hells are emptied.

He is therefore often regarded as the bodhisattva of hell-beings, as well as the guardian of children and patron deity of deceased children and aborted fetuses in Japanese culture, where he is known as **Jizō** or **Ojizō-sama**.

Usually depicted as a monk with a halo around his shaved head, he carries a staff to force open the gates of hell and a wish-fulfilling jewel to light up the darkness.

Ksitigarbha is one of the four principal bodhisattvas in East Asian Mahayana Buddhism. The others are Samantabhadra, Manjusri, and Avalokiteśvara.

At the pre-Tang dynasty grottos in Dunhuang and Longmen, he is depicted in a classical bodhisattva form. After the Tang, he became increasingly depicted as a monk carrying Buddhist prayer beads and a staff.

His full name in Chinese is Dayuan Dizang Pusa or “Bodhisattva King Earth-Matrix of the Great Vow”, pronounced Daigan Jizō Bosatsu in Japanese and Jijang Bosal in Korean. This name is a reference to his pledge, as recorded in the sutras, to take responsibility for the instruction of all beings in the six worlds in the era between the parinirvana of the Buddha and the rise of Maitreya. Because of this important role, shrines to Ksitigarbha often occupy a central role in temples, especially within the memorial halls or mausoleums.

Ksitigarbha (or in Japanese, Jizo) statue at Mt. Osore, a location said to resemble children’s limbo in Japanese Buddhist tradition. There, Jizo is said to appear to rescue the children from the limbo and its iron club-welding demons. Because of this, Jizo statues are often adorned with bibs, kerchiefs (pictured) and haori. In Jizo’s right hand, he carries a khakkhara monk staff, and in his left, a wish-fulfilling jewel.



*Painting of
Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva*

The story of Ksitigarbha was first described in the Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrvapraṇidhāna Sūtra, one of the most popular Mahāyāna sūtras. This sutra is said to have been spoken by the Buddha towards the end of his life to the beings of the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven as a mark of gratitude and remembrance for his beloved mother, Maya.

The Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva Pūrvapraṇidhāna Sūtra was first translated from Sanskrit into Chinese between 695-700 CE, during the Tang dynasty,

by the Tripiṭaka master Śikṣānanda, a Buddhist monk from Khotan who also provided a new translation of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra and the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra. However, some scholars have suspected that instead of being translated, this text may have originated in China, since no Sanskrit manuscripts of this text have been found. Part of the reason for suspicion is that the text advocates filial piety, which was stereotypically associated with Chinese culture. It stated that Ksitigarbha practised filial piety as a mortal, which eventually led to making great vows to save all sentient beings. Since then, other scholars such as Gregory Schopen have pointed out that Indian Buddhism also had traditions of filial piety. Currently there is no clear evidence indicating either an Indian or Chinese origin for the text.

In the Kṣitigarbha Sūtra, the Buddha states that in the distant past eons, Ksitigarbha was a maiden of the Brahmin caste by the name of Sacred Girl. She was deeply troubled when her mother died, because she had often been slanderous towards the Three Jewels. To save her from the great tortures of hell, the girl sold whatever she had and used the money to buy offerings that she offered daily to the Buddha of her time, known as the Buddha of the Flower of Meditation and Enlightenment. She prayed fervently that her mother be spared the pains of hell and appealed to the Buddha for help.

While she was pleading for help at the temple, she heard the Buddha telling her to go home, sit down, and recite his name if she wanted to know where her mother was. She did as she was told and her consciousness was transported to a Hell realm, where she met a guardian who informed her that through her fervent prayers and pious offerings, her mother had accumulated much merit and had already ascended to heaven. Sacred Girl was greatly relieved and would have been extremely happy, but the sight of the suffering she had seen in Hell touched her heart. She vowed to do her best to relieve beings of their suffering in her future lives for kalpas.

There is a legend about how Ksitigarbha manifested himself in China and chose his bodhimaṇḍa to be Mount Jiuhua, one of the Four Sacred Mountains of China.

During the reign of Emperor Ming of Han, Buddhism started to flourish, reaching its peak in the Tang and eventually spreading to Korea. At the time, monks and scholars arrived from those countries to seek the dharma in China. One of these pilgrims was a former prince from Silla named Kim Gyo-gak, who became a monk under the Chinese name Dizang “Ksitigarbha”, pronounced Jijang in Korean. He went to Mount Jiuhua in present-day Anhui.

After ascending, he decided to build a hut in a deep mountain area so that he could cultivate the dharma.

According to records, Jijang was bitten by a poisonous snake but he did not move, thus letting the snake go. A woman happened to pass by and gave the monk medicines to cure him of the venom, as well as a spring on her son's behalf. For a few years, Jijang continued to meditate in his hut, until one day, a scholar named Chu-Ke led a group of friends and family to visit the mountain. Noticing the monk meditating in the hut, they went and took a look at his condition. They had noticed that his bowl did not contain any food, and that his hair had grown back.

Taking pity on the monk, Chu-Ke decided to build a temple as an offering to him. The whole group descended the mountain immediately to discuss plans to build the temple. Mount Jiuhua was also property of a wealthy person called Elder Wen-Ke, who obliged to build a temple on his mountain. Therefore, Wen-Ke and the group ascended the mountain once more and asked Jijang how much land he needed.

Jijang replied that he needed a piece of land that could be covered fully by his kasaya. Initially believing that a piece of sash could not provide enough land to build a temple, they were surprised when Jijang threw the kasaya in the air, and the robe expanded in size, covering the entire mountain. Elder Wen-Ke had then decided to renounce the entire mountain to Jijang, and became his protector. Sometime later, Wen-Ke's son also left secular life to become a monk.

Jijang lived in Mount Jiuhua for 75 years before passing away at the age of 99. Three years after his nirvana, his tomb was opened, only to reveal that the body had not decayed. Because Jijang led his wayplace with much difficulty, most people had the intuition to believe that he was indeed an incarnation of Ksitigarbha.

Jijang's well-preserved, dehydrated body may still be viewed today at the monastery he built on Mount Jiuhua.

In Buddhist iconography, Ksitigarbha is typically depicted with a shaven head, dressed in a monk's simple robes (unlike most other bodhisattvas, who are dressed like Indian royalty). In his left hand, Ksitigarbha holds a cintamani; in his right hand, he holds a staff which is used to alert insects and small animals of his approach, so that he will not accidentally harm them. This staff is traditionally carried by Buddhist monks. In the Chinese tradition, Ksitigarbha is sometimes depicted wearing a crown like the one worn by Vairocana. His

image is similar to that of the fictional version of Xuanzang from the classical novel *Journey to the West*, so observers sometimes mistake Ksitigarbha for the latter.

Like other bodhisattvas, Ksitigarbha usually is seen standing on a lotus base, symbolising his release from rebirth. Ksitigarbha's face and head are also idealised, featuring the third eye, elongated ears and the other standard attributes of a Buddha.

Another category of iconographic depiction is Ksitigarbha as the Lord of the Six Ways, an allegorical representation of the Six Paths of Rebirth of the Desire realm (rebirth into hell, or as pretas, animals, asuras, men, and devas). The Six Paths are often depicted as six rays or beams radiating from the bodhisattva and accompanied by figurative representations of the Six Paths. Many of these depictions in China can be found in Shaanxi province, perhaps a result of Sanjie Jiao worship in the area. A Japanese variation of this depiction is the Six Jizo, six full sculptural manifestations of the bodhisattva. An example of this can be found in Konjikidō, the 'Hall of Gold,' in the Chūson-ji temple.

Mount Jiuhua in Anhui is regarded as Ksitigarbha's bodhimaṇḍa. It is one of the Four Sacred Buddhism Mountains in China, and at one time housed more than 300 temples. Today, 95 of these are open to the public. The mountain is a popular destination for pilgrims offering dedications to Ksitigarbha.

In some areas, the admixture of traditional religions has led to Ksitigarbha being also regarded as a Taoist deity, albeit his duties differ to what Ksitigarbha does. For example, in Hong Kong and among overseas Chinese communities, his images are usually found in the memorial halls of Buddhist and Taoist temples.

In Japan, Ksitigarbha, known as Jizō or Ojizō-sama as he is respectfully known, is one of the most loved of all Japanese divinities. His statues are a common sight, especially by roadsides and in graveyards. Traditionally, he is seen as the guardian of children, and in particular, children who died before their parents. He has been worshipped as the guardian of the souls of mizuko, the souls of stillborn, miscarried or aborted fetuses, in the ritual of mizuko kuyō (offering to water children). In Japanese mythology, it is said that the souls of children who die before their parents are unable to cross the mythical Sanzu River on their way to the afterlife because they have not had the chance to accumulate enough good deeds and because they have made the parents suffer. It is believed that Jizō saves these souls from having to pile

stones eternally on the bank of the river as penance, by hiding them from demons in his robe, and letting them hear mantras.

Jizō statues are sometimes accompanied by a little pile of stones and pebbles, put there by people in the hope that it would shorten the time children have to suffer in the underworld. (The act is derived from the tradition of building stupas as an act of merit-making.) The statues can sometimes be seen wearing tiny children's clothing or bibs, or with toys, put there by grieving parents to help their lost ones and hoping that Jizō would specially protect them. Sometimes the offerings are put there by parents to thank Jizō for saving their children from a serious illness. Jizō's features are commonly made more baby-like to resemble the children he protects.

As he is seen as the saviour of souls who have to suffer in the underworld, his statues are common in cemeteries. He is also believed to be one of the protective deities of travellers, the *dōsojin*, and roadside statues of Jizō are a common sight in Japan. Firefighters are also believed to be under the protection of Jizō.

In Theravada Buddhism, the story of a bhikkhu named Phra Malai with similar qualities to Ksitigarbha is well known throughout Southeast Asia, especially in Thailand and Laos. Legend has it that he was an arhat from Sri Lanka who achieved great supernatural powers through his own merit and meditation. He is also honoured as a successor to Mahāmoggallāna, the Buddha's disciple foremost for his supernatural attainments. In the story, this pious and compassionate monk descends to Hell to give teachings & comfort the suffering hell-beings there. He also learns how the hell-beings are punished according to their sins in the different hells.

The Four Heavenly Kings

In the Buddhist faith, the Four Heavenly Kings are four gods, each of whom watches over one cardinal direction of the world. In Chinese they are known collectively as the “*Fēng Tiáo Yǔ Shùn*” (Good Climate). The Four Heavenly Kings are said to currently live in the *Cāturmahārājika* heaven (Pali *Cātummahārājika*, «Of the Four Great Kings») on the lower slopes of Mount Sumeru, which is the lowest of the six worlds of the devas of the *Kāmadhātu*. They are the protectors of the world and fighters of evil, each able to command a legion of supernatural creatures to protect the Dharma.



Statues of the Four Heavenly Kings

All four serve Śakra, the lord of the devas of Trāyastriṃśa. On the 8th, 14th and 15th days of each lunar month, the Four Heavenly Kings either send out messengers or go themselves to see how virtue and morality are faring in the world of men. Then they report upon the state of affairs to the assembly of the Trāyastriṃśa devas.

On the orders of Śakra, the four kings and their retinues stand guard to protect Trāyastriṃśa from another attack by the Asuras, which once threatened to destroy the kingdom of the devas. They are also vowed to protect the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Buddha's followers from danger.



Vaisravana

Vaiśravaṇa (Kubera):- This is the chief of the four kings and protector of the north. He is the ruler of rain. His symbolic weapons are the umbrella or pagoda. Wearing heavy armor and carrying the umbrella in his right hand, he is often associated with the ancient Indian God of wealth. He is associated with the color yellow or green...

Virūḍhaka :- King of the south and one who causes good growth of roots. He is the ruler of the wind. His symbolic weapon is the sword which he carries in his right hand to protect the Dharma and the southern continent. He is associated with the color blue.

Dhṛitarāṣṭra :- King of the east and God of music. His symbolic weapon is the pipa (stringed instrument). He is harmonious and compassionate and protects all beings. Uses his music to convert others to Buddhism. Associated with the color white.



Dhritarastra

representative of a dragon. As the eye in the sky, he sees people who do not believe in Buddhism and converts them. His ancient name means he who has broad objectives. Associated with the color red.

According to Vasubandhu, devas born in the Cāturmahārājika heaven are 1/4 of a krośa in height (about 750 feet tall). They have a five-hundred-year lifespan, of which each day is equivalent to 50 years in our world; thus their total lifespan amounts to about nine million years (other sources say 90,000 years).



Virudhaka

Virūpākṣa :- King of the west and one who sees all. His symbolic weapon is a snake or red cord that is



Virupaksha

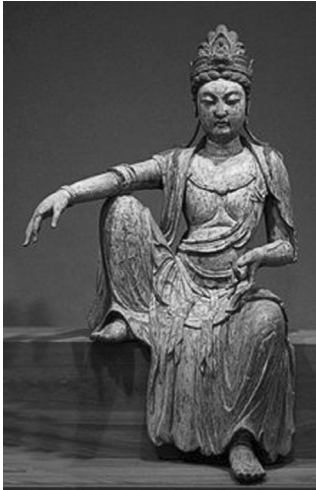
The symbols that the Kings carry also link the deities to their followers; for instance, the nāgas, magical creatures who can change form between human and serpent, are led by Virūpākṣa, represented by a snake; the gandharvas are celestial musicians, led by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, represented with a lute. The umbrella was a symbol of regal sovereignty in ancient India, and the sword is a symbol of martial prowess. Vaiśravaṇa's mongoose, which ejects jewels from its mouth, is said to represent generosity in opposition to greed.

Guanyin is an East Asian deity of mercy, and a bodhisattva associated with compassion as venerated by Mahayana Buddhists. The name Guanyin is short for **Guanshiyin**, which means "Perceiving the Sounds (or Cries) of the World". She is also sometimes referred to as Guanyin Bodhisattva. Some Buddhists believe that when one of their adherents departs from this world, they are placed by Guanyin in the heart of a lotus, and then sent to the western pure land of Sukhāvatī.

It is generally accepted among East Asian adherents that Guanyin originated as the Sanskrit **Avalokiteśvara**. Commonly known in English as the **Mercy Goddess** or **Goddess of Mercy**, Guanyin is also revered by Taoists as an immortal. In Chinese folk religion there are mythical accounts about Guanyin's origins that are not associated with the Avalokiteśvara described

in Buddhist sutras. Guānyīn is a translation from the Sanskrit Avalokitasvara, referring to the Mahāyāna bodhisattva of the same name.

The name Avalokitasvara was later supplanted by the Avalokiteśvara form containing the ending -īśvara, which does not occur in Sanskrit before the seventh century. The original form Avalokitasvara already appears in Sanskrit fragments of the fifth century. The original meaning of the name "Avalokitasvara" fits the Buddhist understanding of the role of a bodhisattva. The reinterpretation presenting him as Iśvara shows a strong influence. As the term īśvara was usually connected to the Hindu notion of Shiva as a creator god and ruler of the world. Some attributes of such a god were



Kuan-yan Bodhisattva

transmitted to the bodhisattva, but the mainstream of those who venerated Avalokiteśvara upheld the Buddhist rejection of the doctrine of any creator god.

The Lotus Sūtra (Skt. Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra) is generally accepted to be the earliest literature teaching about the doctrines of Avalokiteśvara. These are found in the Lotus Sūtra chapter 25, The Universal Gateway of Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva. This chapter is devoted to Avalokitasvara, describing him as a compassionate bodhisattva who hears the cries of sentient beings, and who works tirelessly to help those who call upon his name.

The Lotus Sutra describes Avalokiteśvara as a bodhisattva who can take the form of any type of male or female, adult or child, human or non-human being, in order to teach the Dharma to sentient beings. Folk traditions in China and other East Asian countries have added many distinctive characteristics and legends to Guanyin c.q. Avalokiteśvara. Avalokiteśvara was originally depicted as a male bodhisattva, and therefore wears chest-revealing clothing and may even sport a light moustache. Although this depiction still exists in the Far East, Guanyin is more often depicted as a woman in modern times. Additionally, some people believe that Guanyin is androgynous or perhaps without gender.

A total of 33 different manifestations of Avalokitasvara are described, including female manifestations, all to suit the minds of various beings. Chapter 25 consists of both a prose and a verse section. This earliest source often circulates separately as its own sūtra, called the Avalokitasvara Sūtra, and is commonly recited or chanted at Buddhist temples in East Asia. The Lotus Sutra and its thirty-three manifestations of Guanyin, of which seven are female manifestations, is known to have been very popular in Chinese Buddhism as early as in the Sui and Tang dynasties. Additionally, Tan Chung notes that according to the doctrines of the Mahāyāna sūtras themselves, it does not matter whether Guanyin is male, female, or genderless, as the ultimate reality is in emptiness (Skt. śūnyatā).

Representations of the bodhisattva in China prior to the Song dynasty (960–1279) were masculine in appearance. Images which later displayed attributes of both genders are believed to be in accordance with the Lotus Sutra, where Avalokitesvara has the supernatural power of assuming any form required to relieve suffering, and also has the power to grant children. Because this bodhisattva is considered the personification of compassion and kindness, a mother goddess and patron of mothers and seamen, the representation in China was further interpreted in an all-female form around the 12th century. In the modern period, Guanyin is most often represented as a beautiful, white-robed woman, a depiction which derives from the earlier Pandaravasini form.

In some Buddhist temples and monasteries, Guanyin's image is occasionally that of a young man dressed in Northern Song Buddhist robes and seated gracefully. He is usually depicted looking or glancing down, symbolising that Guanyin continues to watch over the world.

In China, Guanyin is generally portrayed as a young woman donned in a flowing white robe and usually wearing necklaces symbolic of Indian or Chinese royalty. In her left hand is a jar containing pure water, and the right holds a willow branch. The crown usually depicts the image of Amitābha.

There are also regional variations of Guanyin depictions. In Fujian, for example, a popular depiction of Guanyin is as a maiden dressed in Tang hanfu carrying a fish basket. A popular image of Guanyin as both Guanyin of the South Sea and Guanyin with a Fish Basket can be seen in late 16th-century Chinese encyclopedias and in prints that accompany the novel *Golden Lotus*.

In Chinese art, Guanyin is often depicted either alone, standing atop a dragon, accompanied by a white cockatoo and flanked by two children or two warriors. The two children are her acolytes who came to her when she was meditating at Mount Putuo. The girl is called Longnü and the boy Shancai. The two warriors are the historical general Guan Yu from the late Han dynasty and the bodhisattva Skanda, who appears in the Chinese classical novel *Fengshen Yanyi*. The Buddhist tradition also displays Guanyin, or other Buddhas and bodhisattvas, flanked with the above-mentioned warriors, but as bodhisattvas who protect the temple and the faith itself.

One Buddhist legend from the *Complete Tale of Guanyin and the Southern Seas* presents Guanyin as vowing to never rest until she had freed all sentient beings from saṃsāra or reincarnation. Despite strenuous effort, she realised that there were still many unhappy beings yet to be saved. After struggling to comprehend the needs of so many, her head split into eleven pieces. The Buddha Amitābha, upon seeing her plight, gave her eleven heads to help her hear the cries of those who are suffering. Upon hearing these cries and comprehending them, Avalokiteśvara attempted to reach out to all those who needed aid, but found that her two arms shattered into pieces. Once more, Amitābha came to her aid and appointed her a thousand arms to let her reach out to that in need.

Many Himalayan versions of the tale include eight arms with which Avalokitesvara skillfully upholds the dharma, each possessing its own particular implement, while more Chinese-specific versions give varying accounts of this number.

In China, it is said that fishermen used to pray to her to ensure safe voyages. The titles Guanyin of the Southern Ocean and "Guanyin (of/on) the Island" stem from this tradition.

Another story from the Precious Scroll of Fragrant Mountain describes an incarnation of Guanyin as the daughter of a cruel king who wanted her to marry a wealthy but uncaring man. The story is usually ascribed to the research of the Buddhist monk Jiang Zhiqi during the 11th century. The story is likely to have its origin in Taoism. When Chiang penned the work, he believed that the Guanyin we know today was actually a princess called Miaoshan who had a religious following on Fragrant Mountain. Despite this there are many variants of the story in Chinese mythology.

According to the story, after the king asked his daughter Miaoshan to marry the wealthy man, she told him that she would obey his command, so long as the marriage eased three misfortunes. The king asked his daughter what were the three misfortunes that the marriage should ease. Miaoshan explained that the first misfortune the marriage should ease was the suffering people endure as they age. The second misfortune it should ease was the suffering people endure when they fall ill. The third misfortune it should ease was the suffering caused by death. If the marriage could not ease any of the above, then she would rather retire to a life of religion forever.

When her father asked who could ease all the above, Miaoshan pointed out that a doctor was able to do all of these. Her father grew angry as he wanted her to marry a person of power and wealth, not a healer. He forced her into hard labour and reduced her food and drink but this did not cause her to yield.

Every day she begged to be able to enter a temple and become a nun instead of marrying. Her father eventually allowed her to work in the temple, but asked the monks to give her the toughest chores in order to discourage her. The monks forced Miaoshan to work all day and all night while others slept in order to finish her work. However, she was such a good person that the animals living around the temple began to help her with her chores. Her father, seeing this, became so frustrated that he attempted to burn down the temple. Miaoshan put out the fire with her bare hands and suffered no burns. Now struck with fear, her father ordered her to be put to death.

In one version of this legend, when Guanyin was executed, a supernatural tiger took her to one of the more hell-like realms of the dead. However, instead of being punished like the other spirits of the dead, Guanyin played music, and flowers blossomed around her. This completely surprised the hell guardian. The story says that Guanyin, by merely being in that Naraka (hell), turned it into a paradise.

A variant of the legend says that Miaoshan allowed herself to die at the hand of the executioner. According to this legend, as the executioner tried to carry out her father's orders, his axe shattered into a thousand pieces. He then tried a sword which likewise shattered. He tried to shoot Miaoshan down with arrows but they all veered off.

Finally in desperation he used his hands. Miaoshan, realising the fate that the executioner would meet at her father's hand should she fail to let herself die, forgave the executioner for attempting to kill her. It is said that she voluntarily took on the massive karmic guilt the executioner generated for killing her, thus leaving him guiltless. It is because of this that she descended into the Hell-like realms. While there, she witnessed first-hand the suffering and horrors that the beings there must endure, and was overwhelmed with grief. Filled with compassion, she released all the good karma she had accumulated through her many lifetimes, thus freeing many suffering souls back into Heaven and Earth. In the process, that Hell-like realm became a paradise. It is said that Yama, the ruler of hell, sent her back to Earth to prevent the utter destruction of his realm, and that upon her return she appeared on Fragrant Mountain.

Another tale says that Miaoshan never died, but was in fact transported by a supernatural tiger, believed to be the Deity of the Place, to Fragrant Mountain. The legend of Miaoshan usually ends with Miaozhuangyan, Miaoshan's father, falling ill with jaundice. No physician was able to cure him. Then a monk appeared saying that the jaundice could be cured by making a medicine out of the arm and eye of one without anger. The monk further suggested that such a person could be found on Fragrant Mountain. When asked, Miaoshan willingly offered up her eyes and arms. Miaozhuangyan was cured of his illness and went to the Fragrant Mountain to give thanks to the person. When he discovered that his own daughter had made the sacrifice, he begged for forgiveness. The story concludes with Miaoshan being transformed into the Thousand Armed Guanyin, and the king, queen and her two sisters building a temple on the mountain for her. She began her journey to a pure land and was about to cross over into heaven when she heard a cry of suffering from the world below. She turned around and saw the massive suffering endured by the people of the world. Filled with compassion, she returned to Earth, vowing never to leave till such time as all suffering has ended.

After her return to Earth, Guanyin was said to have stayed for a few years on the island of Mount Putuo where she practised meditation and helped the

sailors and fishermen who got stranded. Guanyin is frequently worshipped as patron of sailors and fishermen due to this. She is said to frequently becalm the sea when boats are threatened with rocks. After some decades Guanyin returned to Fragrant Mountain to continue her meditation.

Legend has it that Shancai (also called Sudhana in Sanskrit) was a disabled boy from India who was very interested in studying the dharma. When he heard that there was a Buddhist teacher on the rocky island of Putuo he quickly journeyed there to learn. Upon arriving at the island, he managed to find Guanyin despite his severe disability. Guanyin, after having a discussion with Shancai, decided to test the boy's resolve to fully study the Buddhist teachings. She conjured the illusion of three sword-wielding pirates running up the hill to attack her. Guanyin took off and dashed to the edge of a cliff, the three illusions still chasing her.

Shancai, seeing that his teacher was in danger, hobbled uphill. Guanyin then jumped over the edge of the cliff, and soon after this the three bandits followed. Shancai, still wanting to save his teacher, managed to crawl his way over the cliff edge. Shancai fell down the cliff but was halted in midair by Guanyin, who now asked him to walk. Shancai found that he could walk normally and that he was no longer crippled. When he looked into a pool of water he also discovered that he now had a very handsome face. From that day forth, Guanyin taught Shancai the entire dharma.

Many years after Shancai became a disciple of Guanyin, a distressing event happened in the South China Sea. The son of one of the Dragon Kings was caught by a fisherman while taking the form of a fish. Being stuck on land, he was unable to transform back into his dragon form. His father, despite being a mighty Dragon King, was unable to do anything while his son was on land. Distressed, the son called out to all of Heaven and Earth.

Hearing this cry, Guanyin quickly sent Shancai to recover the fish and gave him all the money she had. The fish at this point was about to be sold in the market. It was causing quite a stir as it was alive for hours after being caught. This drew a much larger crowd than usual at the market. Many people decided that this prodigious situation meant that eating the fish would grant them immortality, and so all present wanted to buy the fish. Soon a bidding war started, and Shancai was easily outbid.

Shancai begged the fish seller to spare the life of the fish. The crowd, now angry at someone so daring, was about to pry him away from the fish when Guanyin projected her voice from far away, saying "A life should definitely belong to one who tries to save it, not one who tries to take it."

The crowd, realising their shameful actions and desire, dispersed. Shancai brought the fish back to Guanyin, who promptly returned it to the sea. There the fish transformed back to a dragon and returned home. Paintings of Guanyin today sometimes portray her holding a fish basket, which represents the aforementioned tale.

But the story does not end there. As a reward for Guanyin saving his son, the Dragon King sent his granddaughter, a girl called Longnü (dragon girl), to present Guanyin with the Pearl of Light. The Pearl of Light was a precious jewel owned by the Dragon King that constantly shone. Longnü, overwhelmed by the presence of Guanyin, asked to be her disciple so that she might study the dharma. Guanyin accepted her offer with just one request: that Longnü be the new owner of the Pearl of Light.

In popular iconography, Longnü and Shancai are often seen alongside Guanyin as two children. Longnü is seen either holding a bowl or an ingot, which represents the Pearl of Light, whereas Shancai is seen with palms joined and knees slightly bent to show that he was once crippled.

The Precious Scroll of the Parrot tells the story of a parrot who becomes a disciple of Guanyin. During the Tang Dynasty a small parrot ventures out to search for its mother's favourite food upon which it is captured by a poacher (parrots were quite popular during the Tang Dynasty). When it managed to escape it found out that its mother had already died. The parrot grieved for its mother and provides her with a proper funeral. It then sets out to become a disciple of Guanyin. In popular iconography, the parrot is coloured white and usually seen hovering to the right side of Guanyin with either a pearl or a prayer bead clasped in its beak. The parrot becomes a symbol of filial piety.

When the people of Quanzhou, Fujian could not raise enough money to build a bridge, Guanyin changed into a beautiful maiden. Getting on a boat, she offered to marry any man who could hit her with a piece of silver from the edge of the water. Due to many people missing, she collected a large sum of money in her boat. However, Lü Dongbin, one of the Eight Immortals, helped a merchant hit Guanyin in the hair with silver powder, which floated away in the water. Guanyin bit her finger and a drop of blood fell into the water, but she vanished. This blood was swallowed by a washer woman, who gave birth to Chen Jinggu or Lady Linshui the hair was turned into a female white snake and sexually used men and killed rival women. The snake and Chen were to be mortal enemies. The merchant was sent to be reborn as Liu Qi.

Chen was a beautiful and talented girl, but did not wish to marry Liu Qi. Instead, she fled to Mount Lu in Jiangxi, where she learned many Taoist

skills. Destiny eventually caused her to marry Liu and she became pregnant. A drought in Fujian caused many people to ask her to call for rain, which was a ritual that could not be performed while pregnant. She temporarily aborted her child, which was killed by the white snake. Chen managed to kill the snake with a sword, but died either of a miscarriage or hemorrhage; she was able to complete the ritual, and ended drought. This story is popular in Zhejiang, Taiwan, and especially Fujian.

Quan Am Thi Kinh is a Vietnamese verse recounting the life of a woman, Thi Kinh. She was accused falsely of having intended to kill her husband, and when she disguised herself as a man to lead a religious life in a Buddhist temple, she was again falsely blamed for having committed sexual intercourse with a girl and impregnating her, which was strictly forbidden by Buddhist law. However, thanks to her endurance of all indignities and her spirit of self-sacrifice, she could enter into Nirvana and became Goddess of Mercy. Due to her symbolization of compassion, in East Asia, Guanyin is associated with vegetarianism. Buddhist cuisine is generally decorated with her image and she appears in most Buddhist vegetarian pamphlets and magazines.

Guanyin is the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Among the Chinese, Avalokiteśvara is almost exclusively called Guanshiyin Pusa. The Chinese translation of many Buddhist sutras has in fact replaced the Chinese transliteration of Avalokitesvara with Guanshiyin. Some Taoist scriptures give her the title of Guanyin Dashi, sometimes informally Guanyin Fozu.

In Chinese culture, the popular belief and worship of Guanyin as a goddess by the populace is generally not viewed to be in conflict with the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara's nature. In fact the widespread worship of Guanyin as a "Goddess of Mercy and Compassion" is seen by Buddhists as the boundless salvific nature of bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara at work (in Buddhism, this is referred to as Guanyin's "skillful means", or *upaya*). The Buddhist canon states that bodhisattvas can assume whatsoever gender and form is needed to liberate beings from ignorance and *dukkha*. With specific reference to Avalokitesvara, he is stated both in the Lotus Sutra (Chapter 25 "Perceiver of the World's Sounds" or "Universal Gateway"), and the Śūraṅgama Sūtra to have appeared before as a woman or a goddess to save beings from suffering and ignorance. Some Buddhist schools refer to Guanyin both as male and female interchangeably.

In Mahayana Buddhism, gender is no obstacle to attaining enlightenment (or nirvana). The Buddhist concept of non-duality applies here. The Vimalakirti Sutra's "Goddess" chapter clearly illustrates an enlightened being who is also

a female and deity. In the Lotus Sutra, a maiden became enlightened in a very short time span. The view that Avalokiteśvara is also the goddess Guanyin does not seem contradictory to Buddhist beliefs. Guanyin has been a Buddha called the “Tathāgata of Brightness of Correct Dharma”.

Given that bodhisattvas are known to incarnate at will as living people according to the sutras, the princess Miaoshan is generally viewed by Buddhists as an incarnation of Guanyin.

Guanyin is immensely popular among Chinese Buddhists, especially those from devotional schools. She is generally seen as a source of unconditional love and, more importantly, as a saviour. In her bodhisattva vow, Guanyin promises to answer the cries and pleas of all sentient beings and to liberate them from their own karmic woes. Based on the Lotus Sutra and the Shurangama sutra, Avalokitesvara is generally seen as a saviour, both spiritually and physically. The sutras state that through his saving grace even those who have no chance of being enlightened can be enlightened, and those deep in negative karma can still find salvation through his compassion.

In Pure Land Buddhism, Guanyin is described as the “Barque of Salvation”. Along with Amitābha and the bodhisattva Mahasthamaprabhata, She temporarily liberates beings out of the Wheel of Samsara into the Pure Land, where they will have the chance to accrue the necessary merit so as to be a Buddha in one lifetime. In Chinese Buddhist iconography, Guanyin is often depicted as meditating or sitting alongside one of the Buddhas and usually accompanied by another bodhisattva. The Buddha and bodhisattva that are portrayed together with Guanyin usually follow whichever school of Buddhism they represent. In Pure Land Buddhism, for example, Guanyin is frequently depicted on the left of Amitābha, while on the Buddha’s right is Mahasthamaprabhata. Temples that revere the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha usually depict him meditating beside Amitābha and Guanyin.

Even among Chinese Buddhist schools that are non-devotional, Guanyin is still highly venerated. Instead of being seen as an active external force of unconditional love and salvation, the personage of Guanyin is highly revered as the principle of compassion, mercy and love. The act, thought and feeling of compassion and love is viewed as Guanyin. A merciful, compassionate, loving individual is said to be Guanyin. A meditative or contemplative state of being at peace with oneself and others is seen as Guanyin.

In the Mahayana canon, the Heart Sutra is ascribed entirely to Guanyin. This is unique, since most Mahayana Sutras are usually ascribed to Gautama

Buddha and the teachings, deeds or vows of the bodhisattvas are described by Shakyamuni Buddha. In the Heart Sutra, Guanyin describes to the arhat Sariputta the nature of reality and the essence of the Buddhist teachings. The famous Buddhist saying “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form” comes from this sutra.

Guanyin is an extremely popular goddess in Chinese folk religion and is worshiped in many Chinese communities throughout East and South East Asia. In Taoism, records claim Guanyin was a Chinese woman who became an immortal, Cihang Zhenren in Shang Dynasty or Xingyin. Guanyin is revered in the general Chinese population due to her unconditional love and compassion. She is generally regarded by many as the protector of women and children. By this association, she is also seen as a fertility goddess capable of granting children to couples. An old Chinese superstition involves a woman who, wishing to have a child, offers a shoe to Guanyin. In Chinese culture, a borrowed shoe sometimes is used when a child is expected. After the child is born, the shoe is returned to its owner along with a new pair as a thank you gift.

Guanyin is also seen as the champion of the unfortunate, the sick, the disabled, the poor, and those in trouble. Some coastal and river areas of China regard her as the protector of fishermen, sailors, and generally people who are out at sea, thus many have also come to believe that Mazu, the goddess of the sea, is a manifestation of Guanyin. Due to her association with the legend of the Great Flood, where she sent down a dog holding rice grains in its tail after the flood, she is worshiped as an agrarian and agriculture goddess. In some quarters, especially among business people and traders, she is looked upon as a goddess of fortune. In recent years there have been claims of her being the protector of air travelers.

Guanyin is also a ubiquitous figure found within the new religious movements of Asia:

Within the Taiwan-based Yiguandao sect, Guanyin is called the “Ancient Buddha of the South Sea” and frequently appears in their fuji. Guanyin is sometimes confused with Yue Hui Bodhisattva due to their similar appearance.

Guanyin is called the “Ancient Buddha of the Holy Religion” in Zailiism and in the teachings of the Lord of Universe Church. In Zailiism she is the main deity worshipped.

Ching Hai initiates her followers a meditation method called the “Quan Yin Method” to achieve enlightenment; followers also revere Ching Hai as an incarnation of Guanyin.

Guanyin, known as “Quan Am Tathagata” (Quan Âm Như Lai) in the Cao Dai religion, is considered a Buddha and a teacher. She represents Buddhist doctrines and traditions as one of the three major lines of Cao Dai doctrines (Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism). She also symbolizes utmost patience, harmony, and compassion. According to her Divine messages via seances, her main role is to teach the Tao to female disciples, and guide them towards divinity. Another of her well-known role is to save people from extreme sufferings, e.g. fire, drowning, wrong accusation/ imprisonment, etc. There is even a prayer named “Salvation from sufferings” for followers to cite in dire conditions.

Some Buddhist and Christian observers have commented on the similarity between Guanyin and the Blessed Virgin Mary. This can be attributed to the representation of Guanyin holding a child in Chinese art and sculpture; it is believed that Guanyin is the patron saint of mothers and grants parents filial children, this apparition is popularly known as the “Child-Sending Guanyin”. One example of this comparison can be found in the Tzu Chi Foundation, a Taiwanese Buddhist humanitarian organisation, which noticed the similarity between this form of Guanyin and the Virgin Mary. The organisation commissioned a portrait of Guanyin holding a baby, closely resembling the typical Roman Catholic Madonna and Child painting. Copies of this portrait are now displayed prominently in Tzu Chi affiliated medical centres.

During the Edo Period in Japan, when Christianity was banned and punishable by death, some underground Christian groups venerated Jesus and the Virgin Mary by disguising them as statues of Kannon holding a child; such statues are known as Maria Kannon. Many had a cross hidden in an inconspicuous location. It is suggested the similarity comes from the conquest

and colonization of the Philippines by Spain during the 16th century, when Asian cultures influenced engravings of the Virgin Mary. Evident by this ivory carving of the Virgin Mary by a Chinese carver. The statue of Guanyin (Gwanse-eum) in Gilsangsa Temple in Seoul, South Korea was sculpted by a Catholic sculptor Choi Jong-tae, who modeled the statue after Virgin Mary in hopes of religious reconciliation in Korean society.



Budai or Pu-Tai is a Chinese folkloric deity. His name means “Cloth Sack,” and comes from the bag that he is conventionally depicted as

carrying. He is usually identified with or seen as an incarnation of Maitreya, the future Buddha, so much so that the Budai image is one of the main forms in which Maitreya is depicted in China. He is almost always shown smiling or laughing, hence his nickname in Chinese, the Laughing Buddha. In the West, the image of Budai is often mistaken for Gautama Buddha.

Budai is traditionally depicted as an obese, bald man wearing a robe and wearing or otherwise carrying prayer beads. He carries his few possessions in a cloth sack, being poor but content. He is often depicted entertaining or being followed by adoring children. According to Chinese history, Budai was an eccentric Chán monk (who lived in China during the Later Liang (907–923 AD). He was a native of Zhejiang, and his Buddhist name was Qieci. He was considered a man of good and loving character.

Budai is often conflated with the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, in spite of the distinct visual differences in how each has been depicted. In India, Nepal, and throughout Southeast Asia, Gautama (who lived during the 6th century BC) is commonly depicted as being tall and slender in appearance. In contrast, in China and those areas to which Chinese cultural influence spread, the depiction of Budai (who lived during the 10th century AD) is consistently short and round.

Budai in folklore is admired for his happiness, plenitude, and wisdom of contentment. One belief popular in folklore maintains that rubbing his belly brings wealth, good luck, and prosperity. In Japan, Hotei persists in folklore as one of the Seven Lucky Gods (Shichi Fukujin) of Taoism.

Some Buddhist traditions consider him a Buddha or a bodhisattva, often identifying him with Maitreya (the future Buddha). His identification with the Maitreya is attributed to a Buddhist hymn, he uttered before his death: “Maitreya, the true Maitreya has billions of incarnations. Often he is shown to people at the time; other times they do not recognize him.”

In I Kuan Tao shrines, he is usually referred to by the Sanskrit name Maitreya. According to I Kuan Tao, he represents many teachings, including contentment, generosity, wisdom and open kindheartedness. He is predicted to succeed Gautama Buddha as the next Buddha, and helps people realize the essence within, which connects with all beings. Angida was one of the original eighteen Arhats of Buddhism. According to legend, Angida was a talented Indian snake catcher whose aim was to catch venomous snakes to prevent them from biting passers-by. Angida would also remove the snake's venomous fangs and release them. Due to his kindness, he was able to attain

bodhi. In Chinese art, Angida is sometimes portrayed as Budai, being rotund, laughing, and carrying a bag.

In Thailand, Budai is sometimes confused with another similar monk widely respected in Thailand, Phra Sangkajai or Sangkachai was a Buddhist Arhata (in Sanskrit) or Arahant (in Pali) during the time of the Lord Buddha. Lord Buddha praised Phra Sangkadchai for his excellence in explaining sophisticated dharma (or dhamma) in an easily and correctly understandable manner. Phra Sangkajai (Maha Kaccana) also composed the Madhupinadika Sutra (Madhupindika Sutta MN 18).

One tale of the Thai folklore relates that he was so handsome that once even a man wanted him for a wife. To avoid a similar situation, Phra Sangkadchai decided to transform himself into a fat monk. Another tale says he was so attractive that angels and men often compared him with the Buddha. He considered this inappropriate, so disguised himself in an unpleasantly fat body.

Although both Budai and Phra Sangkajai may be found in both Thai and Chinese temples, Phra Sangkajai is found more often in Thai temples, and Budai in Chinese temples. Two points to distinguish them from one another are:

Phra Sangkajai has a trace of hair on his head (looking similar to the Buddha's) while Budai is clearly bald.

Phra Sangkajai wears the robes in Theravadin Buddhist fashion with the robes folded across one shoulder, leaving the other uncovered. Budai wears the robes in Chinese style, covering both arms but leaving the front part of the upper body uncovered.

Baosheng Dadi is a Chinese god of medicine worshiped in Chinese folk religion and Taoism most popularly in Fujian and Taiwan. He was born in the village of Bailiao near Xiamen in Fujian Province, during the Song Dynasty in the year 979. He was a skilled doctor and Taoist practitioner who was credited with performing medical miracles, including applying eye drops to a dragon's eye and removing a foreign object from a tiger's throat. After his death in 1036, he began to be worshiped as a deity. His deified status was officially recognized by the Hongxi Emperor of the Ming Dynasty who conferred on him the title of "Imperial Inspector at Heavenly Gate, Miracle Doctor of Compassion Relief, Great Taoist Immortal, and the Long-lived, Unbounded, Life Protection Emperor. He is worshiped at many temples in Fujian and Taiwan, including Dalongdong Baoan Temple (In Taipei. His birthday is celebrated with parades and festivals on the 15th day of the third lunar month.)

Cangjie is a legendary figure in ancient China (c. 2650 B.C.), claimed to be an official historian of the Yellow Emperor and the inventor of Chinese characters. Legend has it that he had four eyes and four pupils, and that when he invented the characters, the deities and ghosts cried and the sky rained millet. He is considered a legendary rather than historical figure, or at least, not considered to be sole inventor of Chinese characters. The Cangjie input method, a Chinese character input method, is named after him. A rock on Mars, visited by the Mars rover Spirit, was named after him by the rover team.



Shortly after unifying China, the Yellow Emperor, being terribly dissatisfied with his “rope knot tying” method (e.g., Quipu) of recording information, charged Cangjie with the task of creating characters for writing. Cangjie then settled down on the bank of a river, and devoted himself to the completion of the task at hand. Even after devoting much time and effort, however, he was unable to create even one character. One day, Cangjie suddenly saw a phoenix flying in the sky above, carrying an object in its beak. The object fell to the ground directly in front of Cangjie, and he saw it to be an impression of a hoof-print. Not being able to recognize which animal the print belonged to, he asked for the help of a local hunter passing by on the road. The hunter told him that this was, without a doubt, the hoof print of a Pixiu, being different from the hoof-print of any other beast alive. His conversation with the hunter greatly inspired Cangjie, leading him to believe that if he could capture in a drawing the special characteristics that set apart each and every thing on the earth, this would truly be the perfect kind of character for writing. From that day forward, Cangjie paid close attention to the characteristics of all things, including the sun, moon, stars, clouds, lakes, oceans, as well

as all manner of bird and beast. He began to create characters according to the special characteristics he found, and before long, had compiled a long list of characters for writing. To the delight of the Yellow Emperor, Cangjie presented him with the complete set of characters. The emperor then called the premiers of each of the nine provinces together in order for Cangjie to teach them this new writing system. Monuments and temples were erected in Cangjie's honor on the bank of the river where he created these characters.

Chang'e or **Chang-o**, originally known as **Heng'e**, is the Chinese goddess of the Moon. She is the subject of several legends in Chinese mythology, most of which incorporate several of the following elements: Houyi the archer, a benevolent or malevolent emperor, an elixir of life, and of course, the Moon.



Chang'e Flying to the Moon

There are many tales about Chang'e, but there's well-known story regarding the origin of the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival. In a very distant past, ten suns had risen together to the heavens, thus causing hardship for the people. The archer Yi shot down nine of them and was given the elixir of immortality as a reward, but he did not consume it as he did not want to gain immortality without his beloved wife Chang'e. However, while Yi went out hunting, Fengmeng broke into his house and forced Chang'e to give up the elixir of immortality to him, but she refused to do so. Instead, Chang'e drank it and flew upwards towards the heavens, choosing the moon as residence to be nearby her beloved husband. Yi discovered what had transpired and felt sad, so he displayed the

fruits and cakes that his wife Chang'e had liked, and gave sacrifices to her.

The recently rediscovered divination text Guizang contains the story of Chang'e as a story providing the meaning to Hexagram 54 of the I Ching, "Returning Maiden". On Mid-Autumn Day, the full Moon night of the eighth lunar month, an open-air altar is set up facing the Moon for the worship of Chang'e. New pastries are put on the altar for her to bless. She is said to endow her worshipers with beauty.

Chiyou was a tribal leader of the ancient Nine Li tribe. He is best known as the tyrant who fought against the then-future Yellow Emperor during the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors era in Chinese mythology. For the Hmong people, Chiyou was a sagacious mythical king. Chiyou has a particularly complex and controversial ancestry, as he may fall under Dongyi, Miao or even Man depending on the source and view.

According to the Song dynasty history book *Lushi*, Chiyou's surname was Jiang, and he was a descendant of Yandi. According to legend, Chiyou had a bronze head with metal foreheads. He had 4 eyes and 6 arms, wielding terrible sharp weapons in every hand. In some sources, Chiyou had certain features associated with various mythological bovines: his head was that of a bull with two horns, although the body was that of a human. He is said to have been unbelievably fierce, and to have had 81 brothers. Historical sources often described him as 'cruel and greedy', as well as 'tyrannical'. Some sources have asserted that the figure 81 should rather be associated with 81 clans in his kingdom.

Chiyou is regarded as a leader of the nine Li tribe by nearly all sources. However, his exact ethnic affiliations are quite complex, with multiple sources reporting him as belonging to various tribes, in addition to a number of diverse peoples supposed to have directly descended from him. Some sources from later dynasties, such as the *Guoyu* book, considered Chiyou's Li tribe to be related to the ancient San miao tribe. In the ancient Zhuolu Town is a statue of Chiyou claiming him to be the original ancestor of the Hmong people. The place is regarded as the birthplace of the San Miao people. The Hmong is a subgroup of the Miao. In sources following the Hmong view, the "nine Li" tribe is called the "Jiuli" kingdom, Jiuli meaning "nine Li". Modern Han Chinese scholar Weng Dujian considers Jiuli and San Miao to be Man southerners. Chiyou has also been counted as part of the Dongyi.

When the Yan emperor was leading his tribe, he met Chiyou leading his Nine Li tribes. The Yan emperor stood no chance and lost the fight. He escaped, and later ended up in Zhuolu begging for help from the Yellow Emperor. At this point the epic Battle of Zhuolu between Chiyou and the Yellow Emperor's forces began. According to legend, Chiyou breathed out a thick fog and obscured the sunlight. The battle dragged on for days while the emperor's side was in danger. Only after the Yellow Emperor invented the south-pointing chariot, did he find his way out of the battlefield. Chiyou then conjured up a heavy storm. The Yellow Emperor then called upon the drought demon Nüba, who blew away the storm clouds and cleared the battlefield.

Chiyou and his army could not hold up, and were later killed by the Yellow Emperor. After this defeat, the Yellow Emperor is said to become the ancestor of all Huaxia Chinese. The Hmong were forced to live in the mountains and leave their Li kingdom.

The **Chenghuangshen** (literally **God of the Moat and the Walls** or **God of the Boundary**, but usually translated as **City God** or **Town God**), is a tutelary deity or deities in Chinese folk religion who protects the people and the affairs of the particular village, town or city of great dimension, and the corresponding afterlife location. Beginning over 2000 years ago, the cult of the Chenghuangshen originally involved worship of a protective deity of a town's walls and moats. Later, the term came to be applied to deified leaders from the town, who serve in authority over the souls of the deceased from that town, and intervene in the affairs of the living, in conjunction with other officials of the hierarchy of divine beings.

In the name Chénghuángshén, the first character cheng means “city wall” (a defensive rampart; or, by extension, walled city) and the second character, Huang, literally means “moat”. Shen means a god. Put together, Chenghuangshen was originally the name of a deity or type of deity believed to be able to provide divine protection to a city's physical defenses, particularly its surrounding wall and moat. Later the concept became more generalized, and the meaning extended to the office itself of such a deity, rather than the presumed office-holder (in later times, it was standard to officially appoint the spirit of the government official in charge of the city to a three year term as City God, upon his decease).

There are temples dedicated to the local Chenghuangshen in many cities of China. Much as the ancient Greeks, the Chinese traditionally believed that guardian gods watched over cities. Chenghuangshen are believed to be involved in communal concerns such as the need for rain, and may be involved in personal requests such as recovery from illness. Town residents may appeal to the City God for help in a natural disaster or other crisis. The City God may also be called upon to help those who are accused of crimes. The accused appear before the god and ask for a sign to help prove their innocence.

Usually, these patron gods are deified deceased officials. Chenghuangshen are believed to hold an important position in the imperial times it was often debated whether local gods such as the City God held more power than the local officials. There could also be a relation between the City God and the official. The official or magistrate would often turn to the Chenghuangshen for advice and help in governing the city.

Over time a large number of City God positions were created by official decrees, along with accompanying temples and images. Of these offices of City God, some might be a low ranking post in charge of a small village; others might be on the level of a whole province. In any case, by the nineteenth century the duties of the City God generally included accompanying three official processions per year and to perform certain administrative functions for the local spirits of the dead: on the 3rd day of the 3rd lunar month to let the ghost-spirits out of their winter quarters; on the 1st of the 7th month, to take census of the ghosts and ensure that they were fed; and on the biggest event of the three, the 1st of the 10th month, to gather together all the spirits, provide them all with winter clothing, and put them in their winter dwellings.

Chinese culture traditionally maintained a distinction between official religion and popular religion. In official religion, worship of the City God was according to the dictates of written legislation and was to be performed by officials and degree holders. The associated activities were designed to help legitimize the state in the eyes of the common people and preserve local social status distinctions. The prescribed sacrifices for a Chenghuangshen are described in the “Auspicious Rites” section of the *Da Qing Tongli*, the Qing dynasty manual for rituals. The official worship of a City God was a solemn and dignified event, with various ceremonies held inside the temples. The animals and food that were sacrificed to the Chenghuangshen were carefully inspected by the religious officials to make sure that they are good enough for the City God.

On the other hand, the City God was liable for punishment if he failed to perform his duties as requested: for example failure on his part to bring rain when properly asked could result in his sacred image being exposed to the burning rays of the sun, or being bodily whipped by the governor or magistrate.

The popular worship of a Chenghuangshen is much more flexible. People come from rural and urban areas to pray to him or her and ask for specific favours. The most common favour requested in these prayers is good health. On the City God’s birthday the people of the town or city have a great celebration (*miaohui*) to honour the City God. These ceremonies often draw huge crowds of people and involve theatrical performances, sales of refreshments, fireworks, firecrackers, noises of gongs and drums, and incense burning.

During the Qing dynasty, the emperor appointed a City God (Shing Wong) for all major cities in mainland China to govern and look after their land. Hong

Kong had no appointed magistrate and therefore no protection of a Shing Wong.

In 1877 Hong Kong built their first Shing Wong temple, which was originally named Fook Tak Tsz. It remains there today, at the junction of Shau Kei Wan and Kam Wa Street, in Shau Kei Wan. It has undergone many updates and name changes. A new outer wall was built in 1974, giving the feeling of a temple within a temple. The temple is now officially called the Shing Wong Temple.

The deities Tudigong, Shing Wong, and Ng Tung are enshrined in the temple. There is some evidence that, prior to the building of the Fook Tak Tsz in Shau Kei Wan, there was a Shing Wong temple built at the junction of Shing Wong Street and Hollywood Road, where Queen's College later stood. However, both buildings have been torn down. There are other temples located in Hong Kong that house the deity Shing Wong, such as the Man Mo Temple.

Yu the Great was a legendary ruler in ancient China famed for his introduction of flood control, inaugurating dynastic rule in China by founding the Xia Dynasty, and for his upright moral character. The dates proposed for Yu's reign precede the oldest known written records in China, the oracle bones of the late Shang dynasty, by nearly a millennium. Stories about his life and reign were transmitted orally in various areas of China, and first recorded in texts from the Western Zhou period (c. 1045–771 BC). Many were collected in Sima Qian's famous *Records of the Grand Historian*. Yu and other "sage-kings" of Ancient China were lauded for their virtues and morals by Confucius and other Chinese teachers.

Yu is one of the few Chinese rulers posthumously honored with the epithet "the Great". According to several ancient Chinese records, Yu was the 8th great-grandson of the Yellow Emperor: Yu's father Gun was the 5th great-grandson of Emperor Zhuanxu; Zhuanxu's father, Changyi, was the second son of the Yellow Emperor. Yu was said to have been born at Mount Wen, in modern day Beichuan County, Sichuan Province, though there are debates as to whether he was born in Shifang instead. Yu's mother was of the Youxin clan named either Nüzhi or Nüxi.

When Yu was a child, his father Gun moved the people east toward the Central Plain. King Yao enfeoffed Gun as lord of Chong, usually identified as the middle peak of Mount Song. Yu is thus believed to have grown up on the slopes of Mount Song, just south of the Yellow River. He later married

a woman from Mount Tu who is generally referred to as Tushan-shi (Lady Tushan). They had a son named Qi, a name literally meaning “revelation”.

The location of Mount Tu has always been disputed. The two most probable locations are Mount Tu in Anhui Province and the Tu Peak of the Southern Mountain in Chongqing Municipality.

During the reign of king Yao, the Chinese heartland was frequently plagued by floods that prevented further economic and social development. Yu’s father, Gun, was tasked with devising a system to control the flooding. He spent more than nine years building a series of dikes and dams along the riverbanks, but all of this was ineffective, despite (or because of) the great number and size of these dikes and the use of a special self-expanding soil. As an adult, Yu continued his father’s work and made a careful study of the river systems in an attempt to learn why his father’s great efforts had failed.

Collaborating with Houji, a semi-mythical agricultural master about whom little is concretely known; Yu successfully devised a system of flood controls that were crucial in establishing the prosperity of the Chinese heartland. Instead of directly damming the rivers’ flow, Yu made a system of irrigation canals which relieved floodwater into fields, as well as spending great effort dredging the riverbeds. Yu is said to have eaten and slept with the common workers and spent most of his time personally assisting the work of dredging the silty beds of the rivers for the thirteen years the projects took to complete. The dredging and irrigation were successful, and allowed ancient Chinese culture to flourish along the Yellow River, Wei River, and other waterways of the Chinese heartland. The project earned Yu renown throughout Chinese history, and is referred to in Chinese history as **“Great Yu Controls the Waters”**. In particular, Mount Longmen along the Yellow River had a very narrow channel which blocked water from flowing freely east toward the ocean. Yu is said to have brought a large number of workers to open up this channel, which has been known ever since as “Yu’s Gateway.

In a mythical version of this story, presented in Wang Jia’s 4th century AD work *Shi Yi Ji*, Yu is assisted in his work by a yellow dragon and a black turtle (not necessarily related to the Black Tortoise of Chinese mythology). Another local myth says that Yu created the Sanmenxia “Three Passes Gorge” of the Yangzi River by cutting a mountain ridge with a divine battle-axe to control flooding.

Traditional stories say that Yu sacrificed a great deal of his body to control the floods. For example, his hands were said to be thickly callused, and his

feet were completely covered with callus. In one common story, Yu had only been married four days when he was given the task of fighting the flood. He said goodbye to his wife, saying that he did not know when he would return. During the thirteen years of flooding, he passed by his own family's doorstep three times, but each time he did not return inside his own home. The first time he passed, he heard that his wife was in labor. The second time he passed by, his son could already call out to his father. His family urged him to return home, but he said it was impossible as the flood was still going on. The third time Yu was passing by, his son was older than ten years old. Each time, Yu refused to go in the door, saying that as the flood was rendering countless number of people homeless, he could not rest. Yu supposedly killed Gong Gong's minister Xiangliu, a nine-headed snake monster.

King Shun, who reigned after Yao, was so impressed by Yu's engineering work and diligence that he passed the throne to Yu instead of to his own son. Yu is said to have initially declined the throne, but was so popular with other local lords and chiefs that he agreed to become the new emperor, at the age of fifty-three. He established a capital at Anyi, the ruins of which are in modern Xia County in southern Shanxi Province, and founded what would be called the Xia Dynasty, traditionally considered China's first dynasty.

Yu's flood control work is said to have made him intimately familiar with all regions of what was then Han Chinese territory. According to his Yu Gong treatise in the Book of Documents, Yu divided the Chinese "world" into nine Zhou or provinces. These were Jizhou, Yanzhou, Qingzhou, Xuzhou, Yangzhou, Jingzhou, Yuzhou, Liangzhou and Yongzhou.

According to the Rites of Zhou there was no Xuzhou or Liangzhou, instead there were Youzhou and Bingzhou, but according to the Erya there was no Qingzhou or Liangzhou, instead there was Youzhou and Yingzhou. Either way there were nine divisions. Once he had received bronze from these nine territories, he created ding vessels called the Nine Tripod Cauldrons. Yu then established his capital at Yang City. According to the Bamboo Annals, Yu killed one of the northern leaders, Fangfeng to reinforce his hold on the throne.

Yu ruled the Xia Dynasty for forty-five years and, according to Yue Jueshu, he died from an illness. It is said that he died at Mount Kuaiji, south of present day Shaoxing, while on a hunting tour to the eastern frontier of his empire, and was buried there. The Yu mausoleum known today was first built in the 6th century CE (Southern and Northern Dynasties period) in his honor. It is located four kilometers southeast of Shaoxing city. Most of the structure was rebuilt many times in later periods. The three main parts of the mausoleum

are the Yu tomb, temple and memorial In many statues he is seen carrying an ancient hoe. A number of emperors in imperial times travelled there to perform ceremonies in his honor, notably Qin Shi Huang.

Ji Gong [a.k.a Li Xiuyuan] was a Chan Buddhist monk who lived in the Southern Song. He purportedly possessed supernatural powers, which he used to help the poor and stand up to injustice. However, he was also known for his wild and eccentric behaviour and for violating Buddhist monastic rules by consuming alcohol and meat. By the time of his death, Ji Gong has become a folk hero in Chinese culture and minor deity in Chinese folk religion. He is mentioned by Buddhists in folktales and kōans, and sometimes invoked by oracles to assist in worldly affairs.



Ji Gong

Li Xiuyuan was born to a former military advisor, Li Maochun. After the death of his parents, at the age of 18, Li was sent to Hangzhou and was ordained as a monk in Lingyin Temple. He was mentored by the vinaya master Huiyuan and was given the monastic name Daoji. Unlike traditional Buddhist monks, Daoji did not like following traditional monastic codes. He had a penchant for openly eating meat and drinking wine; his robes were

often tattered and dirty from travelling from place to place, and stumbling while intoxicated. However, Daoji was kind-hearted and was always ready to lend a helping hand to ordinary people. He would often treat the sick and fight against injustice. The monks bewildered and fed up with his behaviour, expelled Daoji from the monastery. From then on, Daoji roamed the streets and helped people whenever he could.

According to legend, while cultivating the Buddha's teaching, Daoji attained supernatural powers. Many who noticed his eccentric yet benevolent and compassionate nature began to think that he was an incarnate of a bodhisattva, or a reincarnate of an arhat. He was widely recognised by people as the incarnate of the Taming Dragon, one of the Eighteen Arhats. When Daoji died at Jingci Monastery on the 14th day of the 5th Lunar month (17 June 1207), syncretic Taoism began to revere Daoji as a deity. Not long after that, Buddhism began to recognise Daoji's compassionate efforts and he is involved in many classic kōans. A new Buddhist movement, the Hong Kong-based Tung Cheng Yuen Buddhist Association, worship him. Yiguandao has also adopted him into their pantheon of deities, citing Zhang Tianran, contemporary founder of the Yiguandao, as his reincarnation.

Ji Gong can usually be seen smiling in tattered monastic robes, and usually carries a bottle of wine in his right hand, and a fan in his left hand. He wears a hat with the Chinese character Fo, meaning "Buddha". He can also be seen holding his shoes in his right hand. Because of his carefree nature, he is rarely ever shown with a serious facial expression.

A **Dragon King** is a deity in Chinese mythology commonly regarded as the divine ruler of an ocean. They have the ability to shapeshift into human form and live in an underwater crystal palace. They have their own royal court and command an army comprising various marine creatures. Apart from presiding over aquatic life, a Dragon King can also manipulate the weather and bring rainfall. Dragon Kings are a recurring feature in classical Chinese literature. Detailed descriptions are given of the grandeur of their palaces.

They are believed to be the rulers of moving bodies of water, such as waterfalls, rivers, or seas. They can show themselves as water spouts (tornado or twister over water). In this capacity as the rulers of water and weather, the dragon is more anthropomorphic in form, often depicted as a humanoid, dressed in a king's costume, but with a dragon head wearing a king's headdress.

Dragon Kings of the Four Seas

There are four major Dragon Kings, each ruling one of the Four Seas corresponding to one of the four cardinal directions: the East Sea (corresponding to the East China Sea), the South Sea (corresponding to the South China Sea), the West Sea (sometimes seen as the Qinghai Lake and beyond), and the North Sea (sometimes seen as Lake Baikal). They appear in the classical novels *Investiture* and *Journey to the West*.

Because of this association, they are seen as “in charge” of water-related weather phenomenon. In premodern times, many Chinese villages (especially those close to rivers and seas) had temples dedicated to their local “dragon king”. In times of drought or flooding, it was customary for the local gentry and government officials to lead the community in offering sacrifices and conducting other religious rites to appease the dragon, either to ask for rain or a cessation thereof.

The four Dragon Kings in *Journey to the West* are:

- * Ao Guang is Dragon King of the East Sea
- * Ao Qin is Dragon King of the South Sea
- * Ao Run is Dragon King of the West Sea
- * Ao Shun is Dragon King of the North Sea

The origin of their family name, Ao (meaning “playing” or “proud”), however, remains unclear. The names of the Dragon Kings also vary according to the stories they are featured in. There are numerous temples dedicated to Dragon King in China and one in Oregon, United States. One temple in Beijing was built during the Yuan Dynasty and renovated in the early 21st century. Chaotian Palace of Beigang, Yunlin County in Taiwan, is devoted to the goddess Mazu, and also has human-shaped statues for the four Dragon Kings, each riding on a dragon. In contrast to the Dragon Kings, Mazu, although also a deity of sea, is a motherly figure who never wreaks havoc.

The **Eight Immortals** are a group of legendary xian (“immortals; transcendents; saints”) in Chinese mythology. Each Immortal’s power can be transferred to a power tool that can bestow life or destroy evil. Together, these eight tools are called the “Covert Eight Immortals”. Most of them are said to have been born in the Tang or Song Dynasty. They are revered by the Taoists and are also a popular element in the secular Chinese culture. They are said to live on a group of five islands in the Bohai Sea, which includes Penglai Mountain-Island.

The Immortals are:

- * He Xiangu
- * Cao Guojiu
- * Li Tieguai
- * Lan Caihe
- * Lü Dongbin
- * Han Xiangzi
- * Zhang Guolao
- * Zhongli Quan

In literature before the 1970s, they were sometimes translated as the **Eight Genies**. First described in the Yuan Dynasty, they were probably named after the Eight Immortal Scholars of the Han.

He Xiangu, birth name **He Qiong**, is a Chinese mythological figure and one of the Eight Immortals in the Taoist pantheon. While she is often seen as

the only female among the Eight Immortals, the sex of Lan Caihe, another of the Eight Immortals, is somewhat ambiguous. He Xiangu is believed to have lived in the Tang dynasty and was born in either Lingling District, Yongzhou, Hunan or Zengcheng District, Guangzhou, Guangdong.

According to the *Xian Fo Qi Zong*, He Xiangu was the daughter of He Tai, a man from Zengcheng District, Guangzhou, Guangdong. At birth, she had six long hairs on the crown of her head. When she was about 14 or 15, a divine personage appeared to her in a dream and instructed her to eat powdered mica so that her body might become etherealised and immune from death. She did as instructed



The Eight Immortals

and also vowed to remain a virgin. She also gradually decreased her food intake. Wu Zetian once sent a messenger to summon He Xiang to the imperial court, but she disappeared on the way there. One day during the Jinglong era (707–710 CE) in the reign of Emperor Zhongzong of the Tang dynasty, she ascended to Heaven in broad daylight and became an immortal.

He Xiang's lotus flower improves one's health, mental and physical. She is depicted holding a lotus flower, and sometimes with the musical instrument known as sheng, or a fenghuang to accompany her. She may also carry a bamboo ladle or fly-whisk. **Cao Guojiu**, literally **Imperial Uncle Cao**, is a Chinese mythological figure and one of the Eight Immortals in the Taoist pantheon. His real name was **Cao Yi** while his courtesy name was **Jingxiu**, and he was better known to his contemporaries as **Cao Jingxiu**.

Cao Guojiu is believed to be a descendant of Cao Bin, a general of the early Song dynasty, and a younger brother of Empress Cao, the wife of Emperor Renzong of the Song dynasty. As none of Emperor Renzong's sons survived their father, the emperor designated a younger male relative, who later became Emperor Yingzong, as his successor. As such, Cao could not have been a maternal uncle of Emperor Yingzong, so his "Imperial Uncle" status seemed ambiguous. However, as the Chinese character Jiu, which means "maternal uncle", can also mean "wife's brother", it is believed that the latter meaning should apply to Cao. In other words, Cao was the "Imperial Brother-in-Law" of Emperor Renzong rather than an "Imperial (Maternal) Uncle" of any Song dynasty emperor.

Cao's younger brother, Cao Jingzhi, abused his relationship with the imperial family by bullying others and engaging in corrupt practices. Cao tried to persuade his brother to change his ways but he did not listen. In the meantime, he also used his family fortune to help the poor and tried to make up for his brother's misdeeds. One day, Cao Jingzhi was accused by other officials in the imperial court of corruption and abuse of power. Cao felt so ashamed and disappointed by his brother's misconduct that he gave up his official career and went to the countryside to lead a reclusive life. During this time, he met the immortals Zhongli Quan and Lü Dongbin, who taught him Taoist magical arts. After many years of practice and cultivation, Cao himself also became an immortal. Cao is often depicted dressed in official robes and holding a jade tablet or castanets. He is also regarded as the patron deity of acting and theatre.

Li Tieguai, also known as **Tieguai Li**, is a Chinese mythological figure and one of the Eight Immortals in the Taoist pantheon. He is sometimes described

as irascible and ill-tempered, but also benevolent to the poor, sick and the needy, whose suffering he alleviates with special medicine from his gourd. He is often portrayed as an ugly old man with dirty face, scraggy beard, and messy hair held by a golden band. He walks with the aid of an iron crutch and often has a gourd slung over his shoulder or held in his hand. He often is depicted as a clown figure who descends to earth in the form of a beggar who uses his power to fight for the oppressed and needy.

The legend says that Li was born in the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), and was originally named “Li Yuan”. However, in folklore, he is depicted as Laozi’s apprentice, hence he should have lived in the sixth century B.C.

The Eight Immortals became immortals by means of practising Taoist magical arts. According to the myth, they lived on an island paradise, Mount Penglai in eastern China, which only they could traverse due to the “weak water” which would not support ships. Among the Eight Immortals, Li Tieguai was one of the more popular, and was depicted as a man leaning on a crutch and holding a gourd. Some say that in the myth the “gourd had spirals of smoke ascend from it, denoting his power of setting his spirit free from his body.” Others say that the gourd was full of medicine which he dispensed to the poor and needy.

Li studied with Laozi, the founder of Taoism. He is said to have renounced material comforts and led a life of self-discipline as an act of religious devotion for 40 years, often going without food or sleep.

Li lived in a cave in the early stage of his Taoist training. Laozi tempted him with a beautiful woman he had made of wood. After refusing to acknowledge the presence of this woman and therefore defeating his temptation, Laozi told him of his trick and rewarded him with a small white tablet. After consuming this tablet, Li was neither hungry nor ill. Laozi tempted Li again with money. Some robbers had buried money in Li’s field without knowing he was watching. Laozi approached him in disguise and told him he should take any money that came to him. After Li refused, saying that he did not care if he remained poor his whole life, Laozi rewarded him with another pill. This pill bestowed upon Li the ability to fly at amazing speeds.

Before becoming an immortal, it was previously stated that Li was a very handsome man. However, on one occasion, his spirit travelled to Heaven to meet other immortals. He had told his apprentice, Li Qing, to wait for seven days for his spirit to return. If he did not return by then, Li Qing was to burn the body because that meant that he had become an immortal; but after

six and a half days Li Qing had to go home to see to his sick mother one last time before she died. Li Qing thus cremated Li Tieguai's body. He passed by a dying beggar on his way to his mother's but did not have time to bury him. Upon returning, Li Tieguai's spirit found that his body had been cremated and had to enter the only body available at the time, the corpse of the homeless beggar who had just died of starvation. The beggar, unfortunately, had a long and pointed head, large ears with one large brass earring, a woolly and dishevelled beard and hair. He also had long, scraggy, and dark eyebrows, dark eyes, and he had a pan lid on his head and a lame leg. Laozi appeared and gave him a medicine gourd that could cure any illness and never emptied. Li then brought his apprentice's mother back to life using the liquid from his gourd. Li Qing was then dismissed as his apprentice, after being given a small pill and being told that he would work hard enough to become immortal himself. This turned out to be true.

"The gourd served as a bedroom for the night and held medicine, which Li dispensed with great beneficence to the poor and needy." Laozi also used the bottle to make him an iron crutch that would neither rust nor break. He then told Li that he was ready to join the immortals. From then on, Li was tasked with curing the sick and he travelled to many lands and "could be found wherever the sick lay dying or the poor were persecuted."

Probably the second most popular of the Eight Immortals, Li is associated with medicine. His symbol of an iron crutch still hangs outside some traditional apothecaries. One of the reasons for him not being extremely popular is due to his "renowned bad temper and eccentricities." Sometimes, the non devout seek out prescriptions from him through certain Taoist priests. His magical, medical gourd is his more popular sign which is favoured by professional exorcists. As a beggar, he uses his form to fight for the rights of the poor and those in need. He is very much a clown figure and his popularity rests upon the twin attractions of being seen as one of the downtrodden, who is really more powerful than the strongest, and the clown who is irascible.

The Eight Immortals are examples of how all can obtain immortality. Most of the immortals (including Li) were common folk who attracted the attention of the gods through suffering unjust treatment, without complaint, and gave more to others than themselves. They were admitted to eternal life as a reward for their acts on earth and bearing gifts to the Old Man of the South Pole, the god of longevity. "The path to immortality includes achieving physical and spiritual harmony through meditation, diet, exercise, breath control, and the use of herbs. To achieve this state, one also had to eliminate all disease and evil from the body and spirit".

His characteristic emblems are the gourd bottle which identifies him as one of the Eight Immortals and also his iron crutch. A vapour cloud emanates from the gourd, and within it is the sage's huns (soul); which may be depicted as a formless shape or as a miniature double of his bodily self.

Lan Caihe is a Chinese mythological figure and one of the Eight Immortals in the Taoist pantheon. His/her age and sex are not clearly defined. He/she is usually depicted as a boy or girl dressed in sexually ambiguous clothing and carrying a bamboo flower basket and/or a pair of bamboo castanets. LAN was said to have been in a drunken stupor when he/she left the human world by riding on a celestial swan or crane into Heaven. One legend says that he/she became an Immortal with the help of Sun Wukong, who transferred 500 years of magical powers to him/her.

Lü Dongbin was a Tang Dynasty Chinese scholar and poet who has been elevated to the status of an immortal in the Chinese cultural sphere, worshipped especially by the Taoists. Lü is one of the most widely known of the group of deities known as the Eight Immortals and considered by some to be the de facto leader. (The formal leader is more likely said to be Zhongli Quan or sometimes Iron-Crutch Li.) He is also a historical figure who was mentioned in the official history book History of Song. Lü is widely considered to be one of the earliest masters of the tradition of neidan, or internal alchemy. He is depicted in art as being dressed as a scholar and he often bears a sword on his back that dispels evil spirits.

Lü Dongbin is usually portrayed as a scholarly, clever man with a genuine desire to help people obtain wisdom/enlightenment and to learn the Tao. However, he is often portrayed as having some character "flaws", not an uncommon theme for the colorful Taoist immortals, all of whom in general have various eccentricities:

- * He is said to be a ladies man, even after (or only after) becoming an immortal – and for this reason he is generally not invoked by people with romantic problems. This may also relate to some of the Taoist sexual arts.
- * He is portrayed as having bouts of drunkenness, which was not uncommon among the often fun-loving Eight Immortals. This also parallels several Taoist artists renowned for their love of drinking.
- * One story relates that early on after becoming immortal, he had a strong temper as a "young" immortal, even deforming a riverbank in a bout of anger.

- * Lü was also a prolific poet. His works were collected in the *Quan Tangshi* (Complete Tang poetry).

When he was born, a fragrance allegedly filled the room. His birthday is said to be on the fourteenth day of the fourth month of the Chinese calendar. He had been very intelligent since childhood and had many academic achievements. However, according to one story, still unmarried by the age of 20, Lü twice took the top-level civil service exam to become a government official, but did not succeed.

The legend has it that one night when Lü Yan was in Chang'an or Handan, he dozed off as his yellow millet was cooking in a hotel. He dreamed that he took the imperial exam and excelled, and thus was awarded a prestigious office and soon promoted to the position of vice minister. He then married the daughter of a prosperous household and had a son and a daughter. He was promoted again and again, and finally became the prime minister. However, his success and luck attracted jealousy of others, so he was accused of crimes that caused him to lose his office. His wife then betrayed him, his children were killed by bandits, and he lost all his wealth. As he was dying on the street in the dream, he woke up.

Although in the dream, eighteen years had passed, the whole dream actually happened in the time it took his millet to cook. The characters from his dream were actually played by Zhongli Quan in order to make him realize that one should not put too much importance on transient glory and success. As a result, Lü went with Zhongli to discover and cultivate the Tao. This dream is known as "Dream of the Yellow Millet" and is described in a writing compiled by Ma Zhiyuan of the Yuan Dynasty.

Ten trials of Lü Dongbin

A story has it that when in Chang An, Lü was tested by Zhongli Quan ten times before Quan took him in as disciple and Lü subsequently became immortal. These ten trials are described below.

1. One day Lü came back from work and found out that his loved one was in serious sickness and dying, without sadness or remorse, he started to prepare the dress and coffin necessary for burial, but later his loved one revived and lives on, Lü was without sadness or joyous feeling.
2. Lü was selling stuff at a market and there came a buyer to bargain with him, after agreeing on the price, Lü handed him the stuff but the

buyer refused to pay in full and then walked away. Lü would not argue and let him walk away.

3. On the first day of lunar calendar, Lü met with a beggar, after giving him some money, the beggar kept asking for more and threw vulgar words at him, Lü left the scene with a smile.
4. Lü was once a shepherd; during his tenure a hungry tiger was eyeing to snatch the goats under his care. Lü protected the goats by sending them down to the hillside and stood in front of the Tiger, the hungry tiger was at awe to see this and left the place without hurting Lü.
5. Lü was studying at a small hut on a mountain and suddenly a beautiful and gorgeous lady came by and asking for a night to rest since she was lost. That night, this beautiful lady was flirting and trying to get Lü to have sex, but Lü was untouched by such temptation.
6. One day Lü came back and saw his house was burglarized and lost all his belongings, without throwing temper and showing sign of anger he started to work on his farm, suddenly as he dug further on the ground he found countless pieces of precious gold, without greed he uncovered the earth without taking a single piece of the gold.
7. Lü bought some bronze utensils at a market and upon returning to home, he realized all the utensils were gold made and he immediately returned to the seller.
8. A crazy Taoist was selling medicine on the street, telling people that his magic potion would have one of two outcomes: either 1) the drinker would die on the spot, or 2) the drinker would become immortal. No one would dare to try, except Lü, who bought and tried the potion. Nothing happened to him.
9. A river was elevated due to heavy rain, Lü and other passengers were on a boat crossing the river. Before reaching the middle of the journey, the weather deteriorated, resulting in most the passengers except Lü being nervous and worried. Lü took it in his stride and never worried about life and death!
10. Lü was alone at home and suddenly weird things happened. Ghost and monsters were killing each other and wanted to do the same to Lü. Showing no sense of fear, Lü kept on doing his chores without paying attention to them. Another group of devils with blood all over them tried to take Lü's life away by saying to Lü that he owed his

previous life to them since in past life Lü took his life. Without any fear Lü said 'go ahead and take my life since I took yours in past life, this is fair and square!' All of a sudden the sky turned blue and those ghost and devils disappeared. Zhongli Quan (Who happened to be his Teacher and Mentor in Taoist stories) was looking and laughing at him while all these events were happening.

These 10 tests proved that Lü is a pure and dignified person and Master Zhongli was very satisfied and happy to take Lü to Nan San Her Ling to pass his secret to life and subsequently formed a "Zhong-Lü Golden Dan" school of Taoism. But Lü was not too fond on the secret and instead change his formula for inner peace and benefits more human beings; many until today practiced such path to immortals. This is his major effort and contribution. He is said to have helped many to walk the right path and improve the health as well as living condition of many.

Lü Dongbin, one of the Eight Immortals, disguises himself as a man selling tangyuan at the Broken Bridge near the West Lake in Hangzhou. A boy called Xu Xian buys some tangyuan from Lü Dongbin without knowing that they are actually immortality pills. He does not feel hungry for the next three days after eating them, so he goes back to ask why. Lü Dongbin laughs and carries Xu Xian to the bridge, where he flips him upside-down and causes him to vomit the tangyuan into the lake.

In the lake, there is a white snake spirit who has been practising Taoist magical arts in the hope of becoming an immortal after centuries of training and cultivation. She eats the pills and gains 500 years' worth of magical powers. She therefore feels grateful to Xu Xian and their fates become intertwined. There is another terrapin (or tortoise) spirit also training in the lake who did not manage to consume any of the pills; he is very jealous of the white snake. One day, the white snake sees a beggar on the bridge that has caught a green snake and wants to dig out the snake's gall and sell it. The white snake transforms into a woman and buys the green snake from the beggar, thus saving the green snake's life. The green snake is grateful to the white snake and she regards the white snake as an elder sister.

Eighteen years later, during the Qingming Festival, the white and green snakes transform themselves into two young women called Bai Suzhen and Xiaoqing, respectively. They meet Xu Xian at the Broken Bridge in Hangzhou. Xu lends them his umbrella because it is raining. Xu Xian and Bai Suzhen gradually fall in love and are eventually married. They move to Zhenjiang, where they open a medicine shop.

In the meantime, the terrapin spirit has accumulated enough powers to take human form, so he transforms into a Buddhist monk called Fahai. Still angry with Bai Suzhen, Fahai plots to break up her relationship with Xu Xian. He approaches Xu Xian and tells him that during the Duanwu Festival his wife should drink realgar wine, a wine associated with that festival. Bai Suzhen unsuspectingly drinks the wine and reveals her true form as a large white snake. Xu Xian dies of shock after seeing that his wife is not human. Bai Suzhen and Xiaoqing travel to Mount Emei, where they brave danger to steal a magical herb that restores Xu Xian to life.

After coming back to life, Xu Xian still maintains his love for Bai Suzhen despite knowing her true identity. Fahai tries to separate them again by capturing Xu Xian and imprisoning him in Jinshan Temple. Bai Suzhen and Xiaoqing fight with Fahai to rescue Xu Xian. Bai uses her powers to flood the temple and drowns many innocent people. However, her powers are limited because she is already pregnant with Xu Xian's child, so she fails to save her husband. Xu Xian later manages to escape from Jinshan Temple and reunite with his wife in Hangzhou, where Bai Suzhen gives birth to their son, Xu Mengjiao. Fahai tracks them down, defeats Bai Suzhen and imprisons her in Leifeng Pagoda.

Twenty years later, Xu Mengjiao earns the Zhuangyuan (top scholar) degree in the imperial examination and returns home in glory to visit his parents. At the same time, Xiaoqing, who escaped when Bai Suzhen was captured by Fahai, goes to Jinshan Temple to confront Fahai and defeats him. Bai Suzhen is freed from Leifeng Pagoda and reunited with her husband and son, while Fahai flees and hides inside the stomach of a crab. There is a saying that a crab's internal fat is orange because it resembles the colour of Fahai's kasaya.

Since the Northern Song Dynasty, there have been many stories and legends that are connected to Lü Dongbin. The stories were usually about Lü helping others to learn the Tao. According to the official History of the Song Dynasty, Lü was seen several times visiting the house of Chen Tuan, who was believed to be the first person to present to the public the Taijitu.

The kindness of Lü Dongbin is demonstrated in the Chinese proverb "Dog bites Lü Dongbin", which means an inability to recognize goodness and repay kindness with vice. Some say that the original proverb should actually be stemming from a story about the friendship between Gou Miao and Lü Dongbin, who both did for the other great favors, each of which seemed like a disservice initially, signifying the importance of having faith in one's friends.

According to Richard Wilhelm, Lü was the founder of the School of the Golden Elixir of Life (Jin Dan Jiao), and originator of the material presented in the book “*Tai Yi Jin Hua Zong Zhi*” or *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Also, according to Daoist legend, he is the founder of the internal martial arts style called “*Eight Immortals Sword*” considered to be one of the martial treasures of Wudangshan.

According to one story, Lü’s teacher Zhongli Quan became an immortal and was about to fly to heaven, while saying to Lü that if he kept practicing the Tao he would also be able to fly to heaven himself very soon. Lü Dongbin replied to his teacher that he’ll fly to heaven only after he enlightens all the sentient beings on earth (another story says all his relatives). According to the book “*The Eight Immortals Achieving the Tao*” in his previous incarnation, Lü Dongbin was a Taoist master and the teacher of Zhongli Quan.

According to the Taoist book “*History of the Immortals*”, Lü is the reincarnation of the ancient Sage-King “*Huang-Tan-Shi*”.

One of most popular of Lü Dongbin’s legends is his encounter with a prostitute named White Peony (Bai Mudan). The most popular version comes from the *Journey to the East* novel. It is said that the immortal Lü Dongbin was greatly attracted to one of Luo Yang’s most beautiful courtesans, White Peony. Lü Dongbin slept with her many times but never ejaculated, because he didn’t want to lose his Yang essence. Unfortunately Lu’s immortal colleague Iron-Crutch Li and He Xiangtu taught Mudan how to make him ejaculate by tickling his groin. Finally White Peony successfully made Lü Dongbin ejaculate and absorbed his Yang essence. Later she cultivated herself and became immortal too.

Another version comes from *Ba Xian Dedao* novel. This version is more subtle and there is no sexual intercourse here. One day the immortal Lü Dongbin transforms himself into a handsome scholar and tries to advise the famous prostitute White Peony. In their first encounter White Peony seduces him passionately, but he refuses to sleep with her. In their second encounter, Lü agrees to sleep with her. But as they walk to the bed, Lü suddenly cries that his stomach is painful, and faints. White Peony is very sorry about his condition and calls a doctor using her money (despite her pimp’s grumbling, who incites her to throw the sick Lü to the road). Lü (who is only pretending to be sick) is very pleased knowing Peony’s merciful heart. In their third encounter, Lü Dongbin finally succeeds to persuade White Peony to leave her wayward life. She finally becomes immortal too.

In the opera version, White Peony is changed from a seductive prostitute to the daughter of a drugstore owner. One day Lü Dongbin comes to their store and makes trouble by asking for impossible medicines. Knowing her father's difficulty, Peony meets Lü and answers his entire question. From quarrelling they finally become lovers.

In 19th- and 20th-century Guangdong, belief in the powers of Lüzu was strong. In the century after the 1840s, temples were founded which organized spirit writing seances, festivals for the birthdays of the gods, death rituals, and running schools, clinics, and disaster relief.

Han Xiangzi, courtesy name **Qingfu** or **Beizhu**, is a Chinese mythological figure and one of the Eight Immortals in the Taoist pantheon. He studied Taoist magical arts under the tutelage of Lü Dongbin, another of the Eight Immortals. Han Xiangzi is often depicted carrying a dizi (Chinese flute), so he is also regarded as the patron deity of flutists. He is also believed to be the composer of the Taoist musical piece Tian Hua Yin.

It is not known if Han Xiangzi existed historically. However, he is believed to be Han Xiang, a grandnephew of Han Yu, a prominent politician, poet and Confucian scholar who lived in the Tang dynasty. There are at least three different accounts about Han Xiang and Han Yu's grandnephew.

Han Yu once dedicated three poems to his grandnephew, Han Xiang, whose courtesy name was "Qingfu". The three poems are Zuo Qian Zhi Languan Shi Zhisun Xiang, and the two-part poem Su Zeng Jiang Kou Shi Zhisun Xiang. In 819, during the reign of Emperor Xianzong of Tang, the emperor arranged a grand ceremony for an alleged Buddhist relic to be escorted to the imperial palace in Chang'an and encouraged the people to worship the relic and donate to Buddhist monasteries. Han Yu wrote a memorial to Emperor Xianzong to advise him against doing so, and drew on the example of Emperor Wu of Liang and Hou Jing to caution the emperor. Emperor Xianzong was furious and wanted to execute Han Yu, but eventually pardoned him, demoted him, and sent him out of Chang'an to serve as the Prefect of Chao Prefecture. Along the way, Han Yu passed by LAN Pass, where Han Xiang came to join him on his journey. Han Yu wrote the poem Zuo Qian Zhi Languan Shi Zhisun Xiang and dedicated it to Han Xiang.

The historical text *New Book of Tang* mentioned that Han Yu had a grandnephew, Han Xiang, whose courtesy name was "Beizhu". Han Xiang served as a Da li Cheng, an official in the Ministry of Justice, under the Tang government.

In the miscellany *Miscellaneous Morsels* from Youyang, Han Yu had an unnamed grandnephew that lived in the Huai River region. He instructed his grandnephew to study Confucian classics in a school, but his grandnephew showed no interest in his studies and bullied his classmates. Han Yu then arranged for his grandnephew to study in a Buddhist school, but the abbot complained that he was defiant and reckless. Han Yu then brought his grandnephew home and scolded him for not spending his time productively. However, his grandnephew claimed that he had the special ability to change the colour of peony flowers, and demonstrated it in front of him. Han Yu was greatly surprised. His grandnephew then returned to the Huai River region and led the rest of his life as a simple commoner.

Zhang Guolao is a Chinese mythological figure and one of the Eight Immortals in the Taoist pantheon. Among the Eight Immortals, Zhang Guolao, Zhongli Quan and Lü Yan were real historical figures. His existence is said to have begun around the middle or end of the 7th century, and ended approximately in the middle of the 8th. The epithet “Lao” added at the end of his name means “old”.

Zhang was a Taoist fangshi (translated as “occultist-alchemist”) who lived as a hermit on Zhongtiao Mountain in Hengzhou during the Tang dynasty. By the time Wu Zetian came to power, he claimed to be several hundred years old. A strong believer in the magic of necromancy, he also declared that he was a Grand Minister to the mythical Emperor Yao in his previous life. Zhang also had a love for wine and winemaking. He was known to make liquor from herbs and shrubs as a hobby. Other members of the Eight Immortals drank his wine, which they believed to have healing or medicinal properties. He was also known to be a master of qigong and could go without food for days, surviving on only a few sips of wine.

Zhang was the most eccentric of the Eight Immortals, seen clearly in the style of Chinese martial arts dedicated to his memory. The style includes moves such as delivering a kick during a backflip or bending so far back that your shoulders touch the ground. He was known to be quite entertaining, often making himself invisible, drinking water from the petals of poisonous flowers, snatching birds in flight from the sky, as well as wilting flowers simply by pointing in their direction.

Zhang appears frequently in Chinese paintings and sculpture, either with the Eight Immortals or alone, and, like the other immortals, can be seen in many different common artistic mediums and everyday objects. He may be depicted standing or seated, but is typically shown riding his white mule,

usually seated facing backwards. His emblem is a fish drum, which is a tube-shaped bamboo drum with two iron rods or mallets that he carries with him, or carrying a phoenix feather or a peach, representing immortality. Since he represents old age, in the Taoist fengshui tradition, a picture or statue of him can be placed in the home or bedroom of an elderly person to help bring them a long life and a good, natural death. A picture of him on his mule offering a descendant to a newly wed couple can also be found in Taoist nuptial chapels.

Zhang was known for wandering between the Fen River and Qin territories during his lifetime and was known to travel at least a thousand li per day on a white donkey or mule. When his journey was finished, he folded his mule up and placed it in his pocket or a small box. When he wished to use the mule again, he poured water on it from his mouth and the mule regained its form. The Tang dynasty emperors Taizong and Gaozong often invited Zhang to their imperial courts, but he always declined these invitations. Once, when asked by Wu Zetian, he finally agreed to leave his hermitage. As he reached the gate of the Temple of the Jealous Woman, he died suddenly. His body was seen decomposing and being consumed by worms, but he was later seen, alive and well, on Zhongtiao Mountain in Hengzhou.

In 735, during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang dynasty, Zhang was called to Luoyang, where he was elected as the chief of the Imperial Academy, with the honorable title “Very Perspicacious Teacher”. At this time, the Taoist Ye Fashan was highly favoured in the imperial court, thanks to his skill in necromancy. When asked who Zhang Guolao was, Ye replied, “I know, but if I were to tell your Majesty, I should fall dead at your feet, so I dare not speak unless your Majesty will promise that you will go barefooted and bareheaded to ask Zhang to forgive you, in which case I should immediately revive.”

Having been promised by Emperor Xuanzong, Ye Fashan then said: “Zhang Guolao is a white spiritual bat which came out of primeval chaos.” Zhang was believed by some to be able to transform himself into a bat, another symbol of permanence. After giving this information, Ye immediately dropped dead at the emperor’s feet. Emperor Xuanzong, with bald head and feet, went to Zhang as he had promised. After the emperor begged Zhang for forgiveness for his indiscretion, Zhang then sprinkled water on Ye’s face and he revived. Soon after, between 742–746, Zhang fell ill and returned to die on Zhongtiao Mountain in Hengzhou. When his apprentices opened his tomb, they found it empty.

Zhongli Quan is a Chinese mythological figure and one of the Eight Immortals in the Taoist pantheon. He is also known as **Han** because he was said to have been born in the Han dynasty. In legend, he wields a large fan which can resurrect the dead and transform stones into silver or gold.

Zhongli was born in Yanjing. According to legend, bright beams of light filled the labour room during his birth. After he was born, he did not stop crying until seven full days had passed. He was destined for greatness from the day he was born by showing features such as a broad forehead, thick ears, long eyebrows, deep eyes, red nose, square mouth, high cheeks, and scarlet lips. Stories depict that either seven days or seven years later, he began to speak, and the first sentence he uttered was, “my feet have wandered in the purple palace of the [immortals], my name is recorded in the capital of the jade emperor.” Later Taoists celebrate his birthday on the fifteenth day of the fourth month of the Chinese calendar. Following his father’s example, he became a member of the court, advancing to be general of one of the armies of the Han dynasty. During his time as a general, his army fought against Tibet. In his last battle he was beaten by the Tibetans, forcing him to flee into the mountainous areas surrounding him. There he came across an old man who led him to a spiritual sanctuary where he was welcomed in and told that he could stay as long as was needed. There he learned the ways of the immortal rituals and extensive amounts of alchemy. After three hard days of teaching, he was dismissed and told to use his newfound powers to serve his people. When he turned back to talk to the man, he and his home had vanished. Using his power of alchemy and his magical fan, he created silver and gold coins from stones and saved people from poverty and famine.

There are two stories that depict how he became one of the immortals. In the first, it was in his continuous use of the immortal powers and his magical fan that eventually caused his descent into the shimmering cloud of the immortals. In the second, he was meditating near a wall of his hermitage when all of a sudden it collapsed. Behind the wall was a jade vessel that took him as an immortal to the shimmering cloud.

Usually depicted with his chest and belly bare and holding a fan made of feathers or horse hair, Zhongli is often set apart from the other immortals in pictures by wisps of hair on his temples and a beard down to his navel. He is known for his pleasing disposition, and is often painted or drawn drinking wine

Erlang Shen or Erlang is a Chinese God with a third truth-seeing eye in the middle of his forehead.

Er-lang Shen may be a deified version of several semi-mythical folk heroes who help regulate China's torrential floods, dating variously from the Qin, Sui and Jin dynasties. A later Buddhist source identify him as the second son of the Northern Heavenly King Vaishravana.

In the Ming semi-mythical novels *Creation of the Gods* and *Journey to the West* Erlang Shen is the nephew of the Jade Emperor. In the former he assisted the Zhou army in defeating the Shang. In the latter, he is the second son of a mortal and emperor Jade's brother. In the legend, he is known as the greatest warrior god of heaven.

Li Erlang

Of the various identifications of Erlang Shen the most common is as Li Erlang, the second son of Li Bing, the engineer behind the Dujiangyan irrigation system.

According to the "Story about Li Bing and His Son in Harnessing the Rivers" in *Records of Guansian*, Li Erlang assisted his father in the construction of the complex irrigation system that prevented the Min River from flooding and irrigated the Chengdu Plain. In thanks for the prosperity that this brought to them the local people elevated the father and son to gods and dedicated the Two Kings Temple to their honour.

Legend states that Governor Li Bing sent his son out to discover the source of the flooding. He spent a year exploring the county without success. One day whilst sheltering in a cave he encountered a tiger which he slew and seven hunters who had witnessed this bravery agreed to join him on his quest.

The group finally came to a cottage on the outskirts of Guan County (modern Dujiangyan City). From within they heard the sound of an old woman crying. The woman was Grandma Wang and she told them that her grandson was to be sacrificed to an evil dragon who was the local river god. Li Erlang reported this to his father who devised a plan to capture the dragon.

The eight friends hid in the River God Temple and jumped out on the dragon when it arrived to claim its offering. The dragon fled to river pursued by Li Erlang who eventually captured it. Grandma Wang arrived with an iron chain and the dragon was secured in the pool below the Dragon-Taming Temple, freeing the region from floods.

Another legend tells of Li Erlang suppressing a fire dragon that lived in the mountains north of Dujiangyan by climbing to the top of Mount Yulei, turning into a giant and building a dam with 66 mountains then filling it with water from Dragon Pacifying Pool.

Erlang Shen means “2nd son god” as direct translation. Er means 2nd, Lang means boy, and Shen means god. His mother was the goddess of the desire realm in heaven. Her job was to limit the gods and spirit’s mortal desires such as love/affection, greed, and dream. When she was chasing an evil dragon that broke his chain in his heavenly prison, she fell in love with a mortal man who was willing to save her with his heart. They had three children: Yang Jiao, Yang Jian (Erlang Shen), and Yang Chan (Holy Mother of Hua Shan). When Jade emperor discovered her marriage, he sent his son and heaven armies to kill the half bloods, the mortal man, and the goddess of desire realm. Only Erlang and his sister Yang Chan survived.

Many legends, novels as well as television series often describe Erlang as Yang Jian, a nephew of the Jade Emperor. According to an ancient text Erlang Baojuan, Yang Jian’s mother was the Jade Emperor’s sister, Princess Yaoji who was imprisoned under Mount Tao, because she violated the Heavenly Rules by marrying a human named Yang Tianyou. Many years later her son Yang Jian cleaved Mount Tao using his axe, hoping to set his mother free. Unfortunately ten Sun Gods (the Jade Emperor’s sons) arrived and burnt her to death. The angry Yang Jian killed nine of the sun deities, but was advised to release the last sun by the Third Dragon Princess of West Sea. Later he married the Dragon Princess and canonized as deity.

The 2009 television series; Prelude to Lotus Lantern (Bao Lian Deng Qian Zhuan) was made based on Erlang Baojuan. However there were several difference and inconsistency with the original novel, such as the story of Erlang had love interest with the Moon Goddess Chang E or Erlang divorced the Dragon Princess to become the Judicial God of Heaven. Both of stories were unavailable in the original novel.

In this television series, Yang Jian’s third eye is known as the Heavenly Eye. It is not only able to see through deceptions and transformations, but can also fire continuous energy beams of immense destructive power.

Erlang Shen is also identified with Zhao Yun, a hermit who lived on Mount Qingcheng and was appointed by Emperor Yang of Sui as Governor of Jiazhou. Zhao Yu is said to have set forth with 1000 men to defeat a flood dragon that had been tormenting the area. Upon reaching the river Zhao Yu dived into

the water with his double-edged sword and emerged holding the dragon's head. Following his death, according to the Chronicle of Changshu County, the region was once again plagued by flood and he was seen riding a white horse amidst the swirling currents. The locals built a temple enshrining Zhao Yu as the God Erlang and the floods were subdued.

Deng Xia is said to have been a general under Erlang who surpassed his predecessors in valour and defeated a flood dragon, receiving the title "Erlang Shen" and a temple in his honour at Zhongqingli in Hangzhou.

Erlang makes an appearance near the start of the classic Journey to the West by Wu Cheng'en. Erlang, who is titled as being either True Lord, or Illustrious Sage, is the nephew of the Jade Emperor. Erlang made his first appearance when he had been ordered by the Jade Emperor (in which Erlang was also with his seven elite sages whom he called his brothers) to subdue Sun Wukong, who was to be punished for his havoc in heaven.

His bearing was refined, his visage noble, His ears hung down to his shoulders, and his eyes shone. The hat on his head had three peaks and phoenixes flying, and his robe was of a pale goose-yellow. His boots were lined with cloth of gold; dragons coiled round his socks; His jade belt was decorated with the eight jewels, At his waist was a bow, curved like the moon, In his hand a Three-pointed Double-edged Spear. His axe had split open Peach Mountain when he rescued his mother; His bow had killed the twin phoenixes of Zongluo. Widespread was his fame for killing the Eight Demons, and he had become one of Plum Hill's seven sages. His heart was too lofty to acknowledge his relatives in Heaven; in his pride he went back to be a god at Guanjiang. He was the Merciful and Miraculous Sage of the red city, Erlang, whose transformations were numberless.

— Description from Journey to the West, Wu Cheng'en

Throughout the course of Erlang's duel between Sun Wukong, Erlang had been the stronger adversary though Sun Wukong always managed to stay ahead and at times get the better of Erlang thanks to his quick wits. After many transformations that were performed in their duel (Sun Wukong fleeing as a fish; Erlang and Sun Wukong becoming larger birds, and so forth). Near the conclusion of the battle, he managed to see through Sun Wukong's disguise (as a temple) using his third-eye. He eventually defeated Wukong through teamwork with several other gods; Laozi personally had dropped his refined golden ring that had hit Sun Wukong on the head, giving Erlang a chance to bring him down, and Erlang's dog bit him in the leg. After Sun Wukong

had been captured (to which Sun Wukong retorts that they are cowards for attacking from behind), he and his heavenly soldiers would burn random areas of the Mount Huaguo. Erlang is seen again far later in the novel when he assists Sun Wukong through chance by fighting against a certain ancient Dragon King and his villanous son-in-law, a Nine-headed Demon.

In Investiture of the Gods, Yang Jian would first appear during the time of the Diablo Brothers' attack on the Western Foothills. After hearing of the situation, Yang would personally take the offensive against the brothers. During his duel against all four brothers, Yang would deliberately allow himself to be consumed by Diablo Long Life's flying mink. Following the battle, Yang Jian would suddenly reappear before Jiang Ziya after killing the mink inside its stomach with his many transformations. To trick the Diablo Brothers, Yang Jian would later transform himself into Long Life's flying mink and steal Diablo Red's Havoc-Umbrella. Thus, Yang would be renowned as the true reason for Jiang Ziya's victory over the Diablo Brothers at an overall point.

In the tale Lotus Lantern (Bao Lian Deng), Erlang had a sister known as the Holy Mother of Mount Hua (Hua Shan). She married a mortal man, Liu Yanchang, who was a scholar. Together, they had a son by the name of Chen Xiang. She was admonished by Erlang for this unlawful human-deity union and imprisoned under Mount Hua. When Chen Xiang came of age, he split the mountain with an axe to free his mother, but not before facing people who repeatedly tried to undermine his mission, most notably his own uncle Erlang.

As Li Bing, the first hydraulic engineer in the Shu area was the hero who stopped the flooding of the Min River by constructing the Dujiangyan. This somehow led to Li Bing being turned into a folk hero who defeated a river god in order to save his prefecture from being flooded, where this story had then associated him as a new river god that protected the local people in the area from floods. However a discrepancy comes up that even though Li Bing/Erlang was known as Guankou Shen, the river that he is associated with is in Qianwei and not Guankou. Another discrepancy is that Li Erlang had never appeared in any of the tales related to stopping the Min River. The first appearance of Li Erlang was in *Zhishui ji* by Li Ying of the Liang Dynasty.

Historically Li Bing was conferred an official title until the Five Dynasties period under the rule of the Shu kingdom. He rose to political power when the great flood that occurred on the twenty-sixth day of the eighth month in 920 CE, was reported to the emperor by Daoist Du Guangting.

In Chinese belief he was a filial son that entered the Chinese underworld to save his deceased mother from torment and will punish unfilial children by striking them with thunder strike as a punishment, hence the Chinese parent saying “Being smitten by lightning for being unfilial and ungrateful” towards unruly children. A warrior deity, he wields a *Sān Jiān Liǎng Rèn Dǎo* and always has his faithful *Xiàotiān quǎn* “Howling Celestial Dog” by his side. This dog also helps him subdue evil spirits.

Erlang Shen is mostly portrayed, whether in ancient legends or games or television, as a noble and powerful Warrior God who slays and vanquishes Demons and Monsters in the mortal realm and who embodies justice and righteousness. He is shown to have vast, superhuman strength, being able to cleave an entire mountain with his axe to save his mother in just one stroke and being capable of 72 Transformations (sometimes said to be 73 Transformations), meaning he can transform into virtually anything he wants.

His main weapon of choice is his “three-pointed, double-edged Lance” - a long three-pointed Spear with two cutting edges of a Saber, which he wields with outstanding skill and considerable mastery, and is almost always accompanied by his faithful ‘Howling Celestial Dog’, which also has the ability to attack and subdue Demons.

Erlang Shen has also been portrayed as possessing a unique skill known as the “Nine Turns Divine Skill”, which grants him vast, physical durability and near-invulnerability to conventional weapons and various magic spells. In the novel “Creation of the Gods”, Erlang was shown to be completely immune to hits from various powerful mystical objects due to this skill.

The third-eye on his forehead does not have a fixed name, though its most popular name currently is “The Eye of Heaven”. It has the ability to differentiate truth and lies, and see through deceptions and disguises. It may also be used as an offensive weapon, being able to fire continuous, highly destructive energy blasts of vast, incredible power.

Fangfeng is a character from Chinese mythology as well as having been worshiped as a deity in Chinese popular religion. As a mythological figure, Fangfeng is mostly known for arriving late for an assembly called by Yu the Great after the end of the Great Flood, and then being executed at the orders of Yu. Because Fangfeng was a giant (of nearly 10 meters/33 feet), the executioner had to build a big dike in order to reach his head. Modern myths and legends regarding Fangfeng in China tend to emphasize that Fangfeng was wrongly executed: that the reason Fangfeng was late for the assembly

was that on his way there he encountered a local flood and his delay was caused by his efforts to end the flood and save the people. As a god, worship of Fangfeng was most prominent in the Six Dynasties regions of Wu and Yue (modern Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Shanghai). A common depiction of Fangfeng was as one-eyed and browed, dragon-headed, and ox-eared.

Feng Meng/Beng Meng (Peng Meng), or Fengmeng, was a figure from Chinese mythology closely associated with the divine archer Houyi. He was the apprentice of the divine archer and was envious of his skill with the bow and arrow. In a fit of envy and anger, Feng Meng murdered Yi with a club made from a peach tree.

After his wife Chang'e consumed the elixir of immortality, Houyi realized that he would never again be immortal and would soon die. He resolved to pass his knowledge and skills of archery and hunting to the next generation to ensure that they would live after his death. In order to do so, he decided to take an apprentice, Feng Meng; this apprentice soon became an expert archer but even so he was still envious of Houyi's superior abilities, especially after a fateful archery competition in which Houyi killed as many geese as Feng Meng did with his archery despite having a far more difficult target. Feng Meng made multiple attempts on his old master's life; tried to ambush him with his bow and arrow only for Houyi to stop his arrows with a return volley. Finally, Feng Meng resorted to the use of a stick made from a peach tree to bludgeon his master to death.

Other stories are told of Peng Meng, set in times previous to or after this fateful event. In one telling, told during the Chinese 'Mooncake Festival' or Mid-Autumn Festival, Feng Meng (rendered in this translation as Peng Meng), was the cause of Chang'e's fateful decision to consume the elixir of immortality herself instead of sharing it with him. In this telling, Feng Meng attempted to steal the elixir of immortality from Chang'e by force while Houyi was out. As she realized that she couldn't defeat him, Chang'e escaped the only way she could -- by consuming the elixir of immortality and ascending to the heavens where he couldn't reach her.

Gao Yao was the Minister for Law of Emperor Shun in prehistorical China according to tradition. Gao Yao became a political senior advisor of Yu the Great. His father was Shaohao. He was considered the ancestor of the imperial house of Li of the Tang dynasty, which honoured him as Emperor Deming.

He is cited admonishing his king: "Heaven can see and hear, and does so through the eyes and ears of the people; Heaven rewards the virtuous

and punishes the wicked, and does it through the people.” This admonition does not promote a democratic idea; it conforms to the Confucian principle of humane actions.

Some Chinese scholars have argued he is the same person as Ye the Great, said by Sima Qian to have been the father of Fei the Great who was later known as Boyi. Ye was reckoned as one of the ancestors of the House of Ying in the Qin and of the ruling house of Zhao. Gao Yao is sometimes considered the father of Boyi.

Gong Gong, also known as Kanghui, is a Chinese water god or sea monster who is often depicted in Chinese mythology, folktales, and religious stories as having red hair and the tail of a serpent (or dragon). He is often seen as destructive and is blamed for various cosmic catastrophes. In all accounts, Gonggong ends up being killed or sent into exile, usually after losing a struggle with another major deity.

Gonggong is known from the late Warring States period (before 221 BCE). Gong Gong appears in the ancient “Heavenly Questions” (Tianwen) poem of the Chu Ci, where he is blamed for knocking the earth’s axis off center, causing it to tilt to the southeast and the sky to tilt to the northwest. This axial tilt is used to explain why the rivers of China generally flow to the southeast, especially the Yangzi River and the Yellow River, and why the sun, moon, and stars move towards the northwest. Literature from the Han dynasty becomes much more detailed regarding Gonggong.

Gonggong was credited in various mythological contexts as being responsible for great floods, often in concert with his associate Xiang Yao, who has nine heads and the body of a snake. In Chinese mythology, Gong Gong was ashamed that he lost the fight with Zhu Rong, the Chinese god of fire, to claim the throne of Heaven. In a fit of rage he smashed his head against Buzhou Mountain, a pillar holding up the sky, greatly damaging it and causing the sky to tilt towards the northwest and the earth to shift to the southeast, which caused great floods and suffering. The goddess Nüwa cut off the legs of the giant turtle Ao and used them in place of the fallen pillar, ending the floods and suffering; she was, however, unable to fully correct the tilted sky and earth and alter their effects on the sun, moon, stars, and rivers in China. “Gong Gong” is sometimes translated as Minister of Works (e.g., in the first chapters of the Shangshu). In this attempt at demythologization, he joins other dubious “ministers”, such as Long the Dragon.

Guan Yu (died 220), courtesy name Yunchang, was a general serving under the warlord Liu Bei in the late Eastern Han dynasty. He played a significant role

in the civil war that led to the collapse of the dynasty and the establishment of the state of Shu Han – founded by Liu Bei – in the Three Kingdoms period.

As one of the best known Chinese historical figures throughout East Asia, Guan's true life stories have largely given way to fictionalised ones, most of which are found in the historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* or passed down the generations, in which his deeds and moral qualities have been lionised. Guan is respected as an epitome of loyalty and righteousness.

Guan Yu was deified as early as the Sui dynasty and is still worshipped by many Chinese people today, especially in southern China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and among many overseas Chinese communities. He is a figure in Chinese folk religion, popular Confucianism, Taoism, and Chinese Buddhism, and small shrines to Guan are almost ubiquitous in traditional Chinese shops and restaurants. He is often reverently called Guan Gong (Lord Guan) and Guan Di (Emperor Guan). His hometown Yuncheng has also named its airport after him.

The authoritative historical source on Guan Yu's life is the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*), which was written by Chen Shou in the third century. During the fifth century, Pei Songzhi annotated the *Sanguozhi* by incorporating information from other sources to Chen Shou's original work and adding his personal commentary. Some alternative texts used in the annotations to Guan Yu's biography include: *Shu Ji* (*Records of Shu*), by Wang Yin; *Wei Shu* (*Book of Wei*), by Wang Shen, Xun Yi and Ruan Ji; *Jiang Biao Zhuan*, by Yu Pu; *Fu Zi*, by Fu Xuan; *Dianlue*, by Yu Huan; *Wu Li* (*History of Wu*), by Hu Chong; *Chronicles of Huayang*, by Chang Qu.

No descriptions of Guan Yu's physical appearance exist in historical records, but his beard was mentioned in the *Sanguozhi*. Traditionally, he is portrayed as a red-faced warrior with a long lush beard. The idea of his red face may have derived from a description of him in the first chapter of the Ming dynasty historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, where the following passage appears:

Xuande took a glance at the man, who stood at a height of nine chi, and had a two chi long beard; his face was of the colour of a zao, with red lips; his eyes were like that of a phoenix's, and his eyebrows resembled silkworms. He had a dignified aura and looked quite majestic.

Alternatively, the idea of his red face could have been borrowed from opera representation, where red faces depict loyalty and righteousness. In illustrations of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Guan Yu is traditionally

depicted wearing a green robe over his body armour. Supposedly, Guan Yu's weapon was a guan dao named Green Dragon Crescent Blade, which resembled a glaive and was said to weigh 82 catties (about 18.25 kg or 40 lbs). A wooden replica can be found today in the Emperor Guan Temple in Xiezhou County, Shanxi.

Guan Yu was from Xie county, Hedong commandery, which is in present-day Yuncheng, Shanxi. His original courtesy name was "Changsheng". He was very interested in the *Zuo Zhuan* and could fluently recite lines from the book. He fled from his hometown after committing a serious crime and arrived in Zhuo commandery. When the Yellow Turban Rebellion broke out in the 180s, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei joined a volunteer militia formed by Liu Bei, and they assisted a Colonel Zou Jing in suppressing the revolt.

When Liu Bei was appointed as the Chancellor of Pingyuan commandery, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei were appointed as "Majors of Separate Command" and they commanded detachments of soldiers under Liu. The three of them shared a brotherly-like relationship, to the point of sharing the same room. Zhang Fei and Guan Yu also stood guard beside Liu Bei when he sat down at meetings. They followed him on his exploits and protected him from danger.

Liu Bei and his men followed Cao Cao back to the imperial capital Xu (許; present-day Xuchang, Henan) after their victory over Lü Bu at the Battle of Xiapi in 198. About a year later, in 199, Liu Bei and his followers escaped from Xu on the pretext of helping Cao Cao lead an army to attack Yuan Shu. Liu Bei went to Xu Province, killed its Inspector Che Zhou, and seized control of the province. He moved to Xiaopei and left Guan Yu in charge of the provincial capital.

In 200, Cao Cao led an eastern campaign against Liu Bei, defeated the latter in battle, and retook Xu Province. Liu Bei fled to northern China and found refuge under Cao Cao's rival Yuan Shao. Guan Yu was captured by Cao Cao's forces and brought back to Xu. Cao Cao treated Guan Yu respectfully and asked Emperor Xian to appoint Guan as a Lieutenant-General.

Later that year, Yuan Shao sent his general Yan Liang to lead an army to attack Cao Cao's garrison at Boma (Baima), which was defended by Liu Yan. Cao Cao sent Zhang Liao and Guan Yu to lead a vanguard force to resist the enemy. In the midst of battle, Guan Yu recognised Yan Liang's parasol so he charged towards the latter, decapitated him and returned with Yan's head. Yuan Shao's men were unable to stop him. The siege on Boma was lifted. On Cao Cao's recommendation, Emperor Xian conferred the title of "Marquis of Hanshou Village" on Guan Yu.

Cao Cao admired Guan Yu's character, but he also sensed that Guan had no intention of serving under him for long. He told Zhang Liao, "Why don't you make use of your friendship with Guan Yu to find out his objective?" When Zhang Liao asked Guan Yu, the latter replied, "I'm aware that Lord Cao treats me very generously. However, I've also received many favours from General Liu and I've sworn to follow him until I die. I cannot break my oath. I'll leave eventually, so you should help me convey my message to Lord Cao." Zhang Liao did so, and Cao Cao was further impressed with Guan Yu. The *Fu Zi* gave a slightly different account of this incident. It stated that Zhang Liao had a dilemma on whether to convey Guan Yu's message to Cao Cao or not: if he did, Cao Cao might execute Guan Yu; if he did not, he would be failing in his service to Cao Cao. He sighed, "Lord Cao is my superior and is like a father to me; Guan Yu is like a brother to me." He eventually made his decision to tell Cao Cao. Cao Cao said, "A subject who serves a lord but does not forget his origins is truly a man of righteousness. When do you think he will leave?" Zhang Liao replied, "Guan Yu has received favours from Your Excellency. He'll most probably leave after he has repaid your kindness."

After Guan Yu slew Yan Liang and lifted the siege on Boma, Cao Cao knew that he would leave, so he presented Guan with even heavier rewards. Guan Yu sealed up all the gifts he received from Cao Cao, wrote a farewell letter to the latter, and headed towards Yuan Shao's territory to reunite with Liu Bei. Cao Cao's subordinates wanted to pursue Guan Yu, but Cao stopped them and said, "He's just doing his duty to his lord. There's no need to pursue him."

Pei Songzhi commented on this as follows: "Cao Cao admired Guan Yu's character even though he knew that the latter would not remain under him. He did not send his men to pursue Guan Yu when the latter left, so as to allow Guan to fulfil his loyalty. If he did not possess the magnanimity of an overlord, how would he have allowed this to happen? This was a showcase of Cao Cao's goodness."

When Cao Cao and Yuan Shao clashed at the Battle of Guandu in 200, Yuan sent Liu Bei to contact Liu Pi, a Yellow Turban rebel chief in Runan; present-day Runan County, Zhumadian, Henan, and assist Liu Pi in attacking the imperial capital Xu, present-day Xuchang, Henan, while Cao was away at Guandu. Guan Yu reunited with Liu Bei around this time. Liu Bei and Liu Pi were defeated by Cao Cao's general Cao Ren, after which Liu Bei returned to Yuan Shao. Liu Bei secretly planned to leave Yuan Shao, so he pretended to persuade Yuan to ally with Liu Biao, the Governor of Jing Province. Yuan Shao sent Liu Bei to contact another rebel leader, Gong Du, in Runan, where they

gathered a few thousand soldiers. Cao Cao turned back and attacked Runan after scoring a decisive victory over Yuan Shao at Guandu, and he defeated Liu Bei in Runan. Liu Bei fled south and found shelter under Liu Biao, who put him in charge of Xinye at the northern border of Jing Province. Guan Yu followed Liu Bei to Xinye.

Liu Biao died in 208 and was succeeded by his younger son, Liu Cong, who surrendered Jing Province to Cao Cao when the latter started a campaign that year with the aim of wiping out opposing forces in southern China. Liu Bei evacuated Xinye together with his followers and they headed towards Xiakou (present-day Wuhan, Hubei), which was guarded by Liu Biao's elder son Liu Qi and was independent of Cao Cao's control. Along the journey, Liu Bei divided his party into two groups – one led by Guan Yu which would sail along the river towards Jiangling (in present-day Jingzhou, Hubei); another led by Liu Bei which would travel on land. Cao Cao sent 5,000 elite cavalry to pursue Liu Bei and they caught up with him at Changban, Dangyang, igniting the Battle of Changban. Liu Bei managed to escape from the pursuers and reach Han Ford, where he was picked up by Guan Yu's fleet, and they sailed to Xiakou together.

In 208, Liu Bei allied with Sun Quan and they defeated Cao Cao at the decisive Battle of Red Cliffs. Cao Cao retreated north after his defeat and left Cao Ren behind to defend Jing Province. In the Battle of Jiangling (a follow-up to Red Cliffs), Guan Yu was sent to block Cao Ren's supply lines via infiltration, so he led a special force to attack Xiangyang, which was guarded by Cao Cao's general Yue Jin. Yue Jin defeated Guan Yu and Su Fei and drove them away. After seizing and pacifying the various commanderies in southern Jing Province, Liu Bei appointed Guan Yu as the Administrator of Xiangyang and "General Who Rocks Bandits", and ordered him to garrison at the north of the Yangtze River. Guan Yu later engaged Yue Jin and Wen Ping at Xunkou and lost. Wen Ping attacked Guan Yu's equipage and supplies at Han Ford and burnt his boats at Jingcheng. Between 212 and 215, Liu Bei started a campaign to seize control of Yi Province (covering present-day Sichuan and Chongqing) from the provincial governor Liu Zhang. Most of Liu Bei's subordinates participated in the campaign, while Guan Yu was ordered to remain behind to guard Liu's territories in Jing Province and oversee its affairs.

During that period of time, tensions were rising at the border between Liu Bei and Sun Quan's domains in Jing Province as the two allies became more suspicious of each other. After Liu Bei had taken over Yi Province, Sun Quan asked him for three commanderies in southern Jing Province but Liu refused. Sun Quan then sent his general Lü Meng to seize the three commanderies by

force. In response, Liu Bei ordered Guan Yu to lead troops to stop Lü Meng, but Guan was deterred by Gan Ning from crossing the shallows near Yiyang to confront Sun Quan's forces. The shallows were thus named 'Guan Yu's Shallows'. Lu Su (the commander of Sun Quan's forces in Jing Province) later held talks with Guan Yu to discuss and settle the problem. Liu Bei eventually agreed to divide Jing Province between his and Sun Quan's domains along the Xiang River. Both sides then withdrew their forces.

In 219, Liu Bei emerged victorious in the Hanzhong Campaign against Cao Cao, after which he declared himself "King of Hanzhong". He appointed Guan Yu as "General of the Vanguard" and bestowed upon him a ceremonial axe. In the same year, Guan Yu led his forces to attack Cao Ren at Fan (or Fancheng, in present-day Fancheng District, Xiangyang, Hubei) and besieged the city. Cao Cao sent Yu Jin to lead reinforcements to help Cao Ren. It was in autumn and there were heavy showers, so the Han River overflowed. Yu Jin's seven armies were destroyed in the flood. Yu Jin surrendered to Guan Yu while his subordinate Pang De refused and was executed by Guan. The bandits led by Liang Jia and Lu Hun received official seals from Guan Yu, so they submitted to him and became his followers. Guan Yu's fame spread throughout China. The *Shu Ji* recorded that before Guan Yu embarked on the Fancheng campaign, he dreamt about a boar biting his foot. He told his son Guan Ping, "I'm growing weaker this year. I may not be able to return."

After Yu Jin's defeat, Cao Cao contemplated relocating the imperial capital from Xu (present-day Xuchang, Henan) to another place to avoid Guan Yu, but Sima Yi and Jiang Ji told him that Sun Quan would become restless when he heard of Guan Yu's victory. They suggested to Cao Cao to ally with Sun Quan and enlist his help in hindering Guan Yu's advances, and in return, Cao Cao would recognise the legitimacy of Sun Quan's claim over the territories in Jiangdong. In this way, the siege on Fancheng would automatically be lifted. Cao Cao heeded their suggestion. Previously, Sun Quan had sent a messenger to meet Guan Yu and propose a marriage between his son and Guan's daughter. However, Guan Yu not only rejected the proposal, but also scolded and humiliated the messenger. Sun Quan was enraged.

Cao Cao later sent Xu Huang to lead another army to relieve Cao Ren at Fancheng. Xu Huang broke Guan Yu's encirclement and routed Guan's forces on the battlefield, thus lifting the siege on Fancheng. Guan Yu withdrew his forces after seeing that he could not overcome the enemy. The *Shu Ji* recorded an incident about Xu Huang meeting Guan Yu on the battlefield. Xu Huang had a close friendship with Guan Yu. They often chatted about other things

apart from military affairs. When they met again at Fancheng, Xu Huang gave an order to his men, “Whoever manages to take Guan Yunchang’s head will be rewarded with 1,000 jin of gold.” Guan Yu was shocked and he asked Xu Huang, “Brother, what are you talking about?” Xu Huang replied, “This is an affair of the state.”

After Guan Yu defeated and captured Yu Jin at Fan (or Fancheng), his army lacked food supplies so he seized grain from one of Sun Quan’s granaries at Xiang Pass. By then, Sun Quan had secretly agreed to the alliance with Cao Cao, and had sent his general Lü Meng and others to lead a vanguard force to invade Jing Province while he followed behind with another army. At Xunyang, Lü Meng ordered his troops to hide in vessels disguised as civilian and merchant ships and they sailed towards Jing Province. Along the way, Lü Meng employed infiltration tactics to disable the watchtowers set up by Guan Yu along the river, so Guan was totally unaware of the invasion.

When Guan Yu embarked on the Fancheng campaign, he left Mi Fang and Shi Ren behind to defend his key bases in Jing Province – Nan commandery and Gong’an. Guan Yu had all along viewed them with contempt. During the campaign, Mi Fang and Shi Ren sent insufficient supplies to Guan Yu’s army at the frontline, and Guan remarked, “I’ll deal with them when I return.” Mi Fang and Shi Ren felt uneasy about this. When Sun Quan invaded Jing Province, Lü Meng showed understanding towards Mi Fang and successfully induced the latter into surrendering while Yu Fan also persuaded Shi Ren to give up resistance. Liu Bei’s territories in Jing Province fell under Sun Quan’s control after the surrenders of Mi Fang and Shi Ren.

When Guan Yu was besieging Fancheng, Sun Quan sent a messenger to Guan to offer aid but he also instructed the messenger to slowly travel there. He then sent a registrar ahead to meet Guan Yu first. Guan Yu was unhappy that Sun Quan’s offer came late because he had already captured Yu Jin by then. He scolded the messenger, “You raccoon dogs dare to behave like this! If I can conquer Fancheng, what makes you think I can’t destroy you?” When Sun Quan heard Guan Yu’s reply, he knew that Guan was disparaging him, but he wrote a letter to Guan and pretended to apologise and offer to allow Guan to pass through his territory freely.

Pei Songzhi commented on the Dianlue account as follows:

“Although Liu Bei and Sun Quan appeared to get along harmoniously, they were actually distrustful of each other. When Sun Quan later attacked Guan Yu, he despatched his forces secretly, as mentioned in Lü Meng’s biography:

‘... elite soldiers hid in vessels disguised as civilian and merchant ships.’ Based on this reasoning, even if Guan Yu did not seek help from Sun Quan, the latter would not mention anything about granting Guan free passage in his territory. If they genuinely wished to help each other, why would they conceal their movements from each other?”

By the time Guan Yu retreated from Fancheng, Sun Quan’s forces had occupied Jiangling and captured the families of Guan’s soldiers. Lü Meng ordered his troops to treat the civilians well and ensure that they were not harmed. Most of Guan Yu’s soldiers lost their fighting spirit and deserted and went back to Jing Province to reunite with their families. Guan Yu knew that he had been isolated so he withdrew to Maicheng (present-day Maicheng Village, Lianghe Town, Dangyang, Hubei) and headed west to Zhang District, where his remaining men deserted him and surrendered to the enemy. Sun Quan sent Zhu Ran and Pan Zhang to block Guan Yu’s retreat route. Guan Yu, along with his son Guan Ping and subordinate Zhao Lei, were captured alive by Pan Zhang’s deputy Ma Zhong in an ambush. Guan Yu and Guan Ping were later executed by Sun Quan’s forces in Linju (in present-day Nanzhang County, Xiangyang, Hubei).

The Shu Ji mentioned that Sun Quan initially wanted to keep Guan Yu alive in the hope of using Guan to help him counter Liu Bei and Cao Cao. However, his followers advised him against doing so, saying, “A wolf should not be kept as a pet as it will bring harm to the keeper. Cao Cao made a mistake when he refused to kill Guan Yu and landed himself in deep trouble, to the point of considering relocating the capital to another place. How can Guan Yu be allowed to live?” Sun Quan then ordered Guan Yu’s execution.

Pei Songzhi disputed this account, as he wrote:

According to the Wu Shu (Book of Wu, by Wei Zhao), when Sun Quan sent Pan Zhang to block Guan Yu’s retreat route, Guan was executed immediately after he was captured. Linju was about 200-300 li away from Jiangling, so how was it possible that Guan Yu was kept alive while Sun Quan and his subjects discussed whether to kill him or not? The claim that ‘Sun Quan wanted to keep Guan Yu alive for the purpose of using him to counter Liu Bei and Cao Cao’ does not make sense. It was probably used to silence wise persons.

Sun Quan sent Guan Yu’s head to Cao Cao, who arranged a noble’s funeral for Guan and had the head properly buried with full honours. In 260, Liu Shan granted Guan Yu the posthumous title of “Marquis Zhuangmou” which implied that Guan did not live up to his name in terms of his ability.

During the Battle of Xiapi in late 198, when the allied forces of Cao Cao and Liu Bei fought against Lü Bu, Guan Yu made a request to Cao Cao, asking to marry Qin Yilu's wife Lady Du after they had achieved victory. Cao Cao agreed, and Guan Yu repeatedly reminded Cao Cao about his promise before the battle was won. After Lü Bu's defeat and death, Cao Cao was curious about why Guan Yu wanted Lady Du so badly and he guessed that she must be very beautiful, so he had her brought to him. Cao Cao broke his promise to Guan Yu, as he took Lady Du as his concubine and adopted her son Qin Lang (whom she had with Qin Yilu).

When Liu Bei was in the imperial capital Xu, he once attended a hunting expedition together with Cao Cao, during which Guan Yu urged him to kill Cao but he refused. Later, when Liu Bei reached Xiakou (after his defeat at the Battle of Changban), Guan Yu angrily said, "If you had heeded my advice during the hunting expedition in Xu, we would not have ended up in this troubling situation." Liu Bei replied, "I did not do so then for the sake of the Empire. If Heaven still helps those who are righteous, it might be possible that this may turn out to be a blessing in disguise!"

Pei Songzhi commented on the incident as such:

When Liu Bei, Dong Cheng and others plotted against Cao Cao, their plan failed because it was leaked out. If he did not want to kill Cao Cao for the sake of the country, what did he mean when he said this? If Guan Yu really did urge Liu Bei to kill Cao Cao during the hunting expedition and Liu did not do so, it was probably because Cao Cao's close aides and relatives were present at the scene and had superiority in numbers. Besides, there was a lack of careful planning so Liu Bei had to wait for another opportunity. Even if Liu Bei succeeded in killing Cao Cao, he would not have been able to escape alive, so Liu did not heed Guan Yu's words. There was nothing to regret about. The hunting expedition event happened in the past, so it was used to justify that Guan Yu had given Liu Bei "valued advice", which the latter ignored.

In 215, Ma Chao defected from Zhang Lu's side to Liu Bei's forces, and he assisted Liu Bei in pressuring Liu Zhang to surrender and yield Yi Province to Liu Bei. When Guan Yu received news that Ma Chao (whom he was unfamiliar with) had recently joined them, he wrote to Zhuge Liang in Yi Province and asked the latter who could compete with Ma Chao. Zhuge Liang knew that Guan Yu was defending their border (so he should not displease the latter). As such, he replied, "Mengqi is proficient in both civil and military affairs. He is fierce and mighty, and a hero of his time. He is comparable to Qing Bu

and Peng Yue. He can compete with Yide, but is not as good as the peerless beard." Guan Yu was very pleased when he received Zhuge Liang's reply and he welcomed Ma Chao.

Guan Yu was once injured in the left arm by a stray arrow, which pierced through his arm. Although the wound had healed, he would experience pain in the bone whenever there was a heavy downpour. A physician told him, "The arrowhead had poison on it and the poison had seeped into the bone. The way to get rid of this problem is to cut open your arm and scrape away the poison in your bone." Guan Yu then stretched out his arm and asked the physician to heal him. He then invited his subordinates to dine with him while the surgery was being performed. Blood flowed from his arm into a container below. Throughout the operation, Guan Yu feasted and drank wine and chatted with his men as though nothing had happened.

Guan Yu had two known sons – Guan Ping and Guan Xing. Guan Xing inherited his father's title "Marquis of Hanshou Village" and served in the state of Shu during the Three Kingdoms period. Guan Yu also had a daughter. Sun Quan once proposed a marriage between his son and Guan Yu's daughter, but Guan rejected the proposal. Her name was not recorded in history, but she was known as "Guan Yinping" or "Guan Feng" in folktales and Chinese opera. Guan Yu allegedly had a third son, Guan Suo, who is not mentioned in historical texts and appears only in folklore and the historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

Guan Xing's son, Guan Tong, married a princess (one of Liu Shan's daughters) and served as a "General of the Household" in the Rapid as Tigers division of the imperial guards. Guan Tong had no son when he died, so he was succeeded by his younger half-brother Guan Yi. According to the *Shu Ji*, after the fall of Shu in 263, Pang Hui (Pang De's son) massacred Guan Yu's family and descendants to avenge his father, who was executed by Guan Yu after the Battle of Fancheng in 219.

Chen Shou, who wrote Guan Yu's biography in the *Sanguozhi*, commented on the latter as such: "Guan Yu [...] was referred to as mighty warriors capable of fighting thousands of enemies. They were like tigers among (Liu Bei's) subjects. Guan Yu [...] had the style of a *guoshi*. When he repaid Cao Cao's kindness [...] However, Guan Yu was unrelenting and conceited, [...] and these shortcomings resulted in their downfalls. This was not something uncommon."

Nüba, also known as Ba and as Hanba is a Chinese drought deity. "Ba" is her proper name, with the Nu being an added indication of being feminine

and Han meaning “drought”. Ba is the daughter of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi) whom she aided during his Battle at Zhuolu against Chiyou: after Chiyou had fielded a wind god (Feng Bo) and a rain god (Yu Shi), Ba descended from heaven to use her drought power to defeat their wind and rain powers. She is one of the first goddesses attested to in Chinese literature, appearing in the early collection of poetry, the *Shijing*, as well as in the later *Shanhaijing*. Nüba can be considered to be an ancient Chinese mythical drought demon. After having descended from Heaven to aid Huangdi at Zhuolu, instead of returning to heaven, Ba wandered the earth. Wherever Ba appeared there would be a drought.

Ba is described in the *Shanhaijing* as bald and dressed in green. In the *Shenyijing* of Han dynasty or Six Dynasties times, she is described as above average height, but otherwise looking like a person, who walked naked as fast as the wind.

Up through the middle of the twentieth century, ceremonies to produce rain were held in many regions of China. The basic idea of these ceremonies, which could last several hours, was to drive Ba out of the region. Once Ba was chased away, then the drought was thought to depart along with her, and that rain would then be sure to soon commence.

Houyi, formerly romanized as Hou-i, was a mythological Chinese archer. He was also known as Shenyi and simply as Yi. He is sometimes portrayed as a god of archery descended from heaven to aid mankind. His wife, Chang’e, was a lunar deity.

The Time of the Ten Suns

In China, the Sun is sometimes symbolized as a three-legged crow called a sunbird. There were ten of these sunbirds, each of whom are the offspring of Di Jun, God of the Eastern Heaven. The ten sunbirds resided in a mulberry tree in the Eastern Sea; each day one would travel around the world on a carriage, driven by Xihe, Mother of the Suns. Eventually, the sunbirds grew tired of the routine and decided that all of them were to rise at the same time. The heat on earth became intense. As a result, crops shriveled in the fields. Lakes and ponds dried up. Human and non-human animals cowered in shelters or collapsed from exhaustion. Time passed and the suffering continued. Emperor Yao decided to plead for divine intervention and to ask Di Jun for aid.

Di Jun was well aware of his sons’ misdeeds and sent for Houyi, the God of Archery, to teach his sons a lesson. Di Jun wanted Houyi to simply frighten

them so that they would not dare to cause mischief again. Houyi, too, wanted to settle this crisis peacefully, but a single glance at the scorched land was enough to convince him that desperate measures were needed. Angered by the suffering of the people caused by the Sun-birds' misconduct, Houyi lifted up his bow and shot them down one by one. Upon killing the ninth, Emperor Yao hurried to halt him as killing the last one would leave the world in total darkness. Houyi agreed and was hailed as a hero for mankind, but later, Houyi's actions caused him to make enemies in Heaven and as a result he was punished with divine wrath.

In an alternative version, Houyi attempted to settle the problem peacefully by simply frightening the Sun-birds, but approaching the Sun-birds and threatening them with the arrows, but the sun-birds laughed at him and said he wouldn't dare shoot them, knowing that their father would not kill them. Angered by this Houyi took aim and shot one of the suns from the sky. Houyi realised he had acted out of anger and knew he was in trouble with Di Jun, but reasoned that since he had already begun the task he might as well finish it and shot the remaining suns out of the sky one-by-one, but before he could shoot the last sun the Emperor came to stop him reminding him the world needed the sun. From that day the remaining sun-bird now scared by Houyi, always did his duty and behaved well, always rising and setting on time.

Although Yao was pleased with Houyi, Dijun was not happy. Yi had killed nine of the Sun-birds, nine of his errant children, instead of merely bringing them to heel as Dijun wished. As a father, Dijun could not forgive Yi, so he decided to punish him by banishing the hero from the heavens and stripping him of his immortality. He thought that if Houyi cared so much for the mortals, he could live as one.

Houyi then set off on a series of epic adventures to save China. First he had to deal with Fei Lian, Count of the Winds, who created storms that swept across the Middle Kingdom, uprooting crops and tearing down houses. Fei Lian is a fearsome spirit who generally took the form of a one-eyed bull with the tail of a serpent; he resides in Mount Tai. Using his power to travel on the wind, he tracked the gales back to the Demon's habitat. Noticing that the Divine Archer was on his way, Fei Lian hid in a sack. When Houyi entered the monster's cave, he saw through the Demon's subterfuge, and fired an arrow at it, which burst the sack right open. Fei Lian attempted to run but Houyi quickly struck the Demon on his knee. Wounded, Fei Lian surrendered and promised not to stir up trouble again.

During his crusade, Houyi happened to come upon a river that had burst its banks. Houyi knew that this must be the doings of a turbulent water god, so he shot an arrow at random into the water. Soon the flood receded and a white-garbed figure on a white horse with several attendants surfaced upon the water. Instantly, Houyi attacked him, wounding him in the eye. The god then fled, leaving his companions behind. Next, Houyi took aim at the nearest figure but when he was about to fire, he noticed his target was a harmless girl. He swung his bow so that the arrow whistled harmlessly through her hair. The girl was Chang'e, the daughter of the water god that had fled. Houyi, stunned by her unearthly beauty, asked her on the spot to be his wife. Chang'e, with great respect for the hero, accepted the proposal.

The next threat Houyi had to face was a plague of monsters marauding through the world. Among them was Chilseltooth, a fearsome giant with a single huge incisor protruding from the top of his mouth which he used to rend his victims' flesh. In addition, a monstrous water serpent (see Bashe) was disrupting the calm of Lake Dongting, and the giant Peng bird caused storms merely by flapping its wings. Houyi managed to fend off these menaces one after the other. For Houyi's service to the human realm, Emperor Yao bestowed on him the title of Marquis Pacifier of the Country.

Although Houyi cared little about being banished from Heaven, he couldn't bear the fact that he would one day die and become nothing. Searching for a way to regain his immortality, he traveled to the palace of Xi Wang Mu, the Queen Mother of the West, on the Kunlun Mountain, seeking her elixir of immortality. The stories of the great hero Houyi were known to the goddess and she took pity on him and agreed to give him the elixir, but with one condition: knowing that Houyi was a skilled architect, she asked him to build her a summer palace in exchange for the immortality drug. He agreed and for many months he laboured and earned it. Before departing, Xi Wang Mu warned Houyi that the two elixirs she had given him were the last of their kinds. Houyi planned to spend them on himself and his wife.

When Houyi returned to his home, he found that Emperor Yao had urgent requests for him, and he made haste to respond. Houyi made a vital mistake by not taking the elixir immediately, and leaving them unguarded. While Houyi was vanquishing humanity's foes, including giant boars, dragons, and other monsters (including the giant Chiseltooth and a monstrous sea serpent,) his wife stayed at home, and for months, he had no news of home.

In her boredom, Chang'e found the elixirs that her husband had left behind; out of curiosity, she drank them both. At this moment, Houyi returned and to his surprise found his wife ascending to the moon. Houyi heard his wife's cry for help and tried to seize her, but she was already beyond his reach. Chang'e would gain immortality and forever lived alone on the moon with only white hares accompanying her. According to some folklore, these rabbits pour the elixir of life for her; in others, particularly Japanese and Korean retellings, these rabbits do nothing but make rice cakes.

The grief of the loss of his wife changed Houyi completely. He became violent and changed from a hero welcomed by the mortals to being hated as a tyrant.

Houyi had taught mortals the ways of using the bow and had a prized student called Feng Meng. Feng Meng's archery skills had blossomed under Houyi's tutelage and soon he saw himself as worthy of comparison with Houyi. One day, Feng Meng challenged him to a shooting contest. Houyi easily beat him which convinced Feng Meng that, despite his amazing marksmanship, there was no way he could catch up to his master. Blinded by jealousy, Feng Meng decided to murder his teacher. To him, it was entirely justified as Houyi was no longer an honorable hero but a tyrant. One day during a hunt, he attacked him, striking him on the back with a club made from the wood of a peach tree. Along with others that were angry at Houyi, Feng Meng beat Houyi to death. Although these men were to be brought to justice, the epic of Houyi finally came to a bitter end. Later, the spirit of Houyi ascended to the sun and built a palace. So Chang'e and Houyi came to represent the yin and yang, the moon and the sun.

Hung Shing, also known as **Hung Shing Ye** and **Tai Wong**, was a government official in the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907) named **Hung Hei** serving Pun Yue in present-day Guangdong, China. His festival is held on the 13th day of the 2nd month in Chinese calendar.

Hung Hei was a righteous government official who won approbation from the people. During his tenure in office, he promoted the study and application of astronomy, geography and mathematics, and established an observatory to observe the meteorological changes, thus contributing to the well being of people under his governance, especially fishermen and sea traders. Unfortunately, he died young.

After his death, an Emperor of the Tang Dynasty disseminated his virtues to the whole country and bestowed upon him the posthumous title of **Nam**

Hoi Kwong Li Hung Shing Tai Wong lit. the Saint King Hung the Widely Beneficial of South Sea. It is usually shortened to **Hung Shing** or **Tai Wong**.

Legend has it that Hung Shing continued to guard the people against natural disasters on numerous occasions after his death, and showed his presence to save many people during tempests. The government as well as fishermen in the surrounding area built many temples to worship him as the God of Southern Sea. Hung Shing temples have been widely built in southern China, especially Guangdong province and in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, they are named Hung Shing Miu or Tai Wong Miu.

Kua Fu or **Kuafu** is a giant in Chinese mythology who wished to capture the Sun. He was a grandson of Houtu. One day, Kuafu decided to chase and catch the Sun. With each stride he gets closer to the Sun, however, he could never catch up to it.

He followed the Sun from the East to the West, draining all rivers and lakes crossing his path as sources of water to quench his burning thirst as he closed in on the star. However, he wasn't able to finish his quest because he died of the extreme heat and exhaustion.

The wooden club he was carrying grew into a vast forest. In one version, Kua Fu turns into a mountain range. In modern Chinese usage, the story of Kua Fu chasing the Sun is used to describe a person who fails to obtain his goal because he greatly overestimates himself.

"Kua Fu" can also be taken to refer to his people, the Kuafu-shi or "Clan of Kuafu". Since shi can mean both "clan" and "maiden name" and serve as a masculine honorific like "mister" or "sir", it is sometimes used in reference to his people, sometimes in reference to the individual. During the battle of Banquan, Chi You's tribes allied themselves with the Kua Fu tribe and the Sanmiao tribe and attacked the Yan Emperor's tribe, driving them into the lands of the Yellow Emperor.

Kui Xing "Great Master Kui" or "Great Kui the Star Prince", is a character in Chinese mythology, the god of examinations, and an associate or servant of the god of literature, Wen Chang. The name 'Kui Xing' literally means "Chief Star(s)", and anciently referred to the 'spoon' of the Big Dipper. The Chun Qiu Yun Dou Shu defines the 'Kui Xing' as "The four stars in the first section of the dipper". The 'handle' was referred to as the 杓 shao, or ladle/spoon. Kui Xing's original name, is the original name of the star in the Big Dipper located furthest from the 'handle' - Dubhe.



In Daoist tradition, Kui Xing is said to have been “bent and hunchbacked, as if he were an actual calligraphy character”, and came to be viewed as a saint of human fortune, particularly with regard to imperial examinations. Late Ming Dynasty scholar Gu Yan-Wu, often referred to as Gu Ting-Lin, wrote of Kui Xing in his *Record of Historical Knowledge*: “The date of the beginning of modern people’s veneration of Kui Xing is unknown. Since Kui was taken to be the master of composition, therefore the people established shrines to venerate him. Being unable to sculpt an image of the star, his name was thus changed to [the homophonous character]. Again being unable to directly construct an image of, the character was split into its constituent radicals [Gui - Ghost/Spirit and Dou - Ladle/Gourd] and illustrated as such.” GU’s statement suggests the name change was a creative measure designed to facilitate Kui Xing’s veneration.

As his form developed, people depicted Kui Xing’s right foot standing on a character (ao), a giant turtle, in reference to a traditional saying, “to stand lonely on the ao’s head”, meaning coming in first in examinations), his left foot support a ladle, a writing brush in his hand, and his body full of vigor and life. Stylized calligraphy of Confucian adages often composes his torso.

Artists have also depicted the ao on which Kui Xing stands as a giant fish (see the image of a temple in Xinwupu, Hubei), or as a realistic-looking turtle (e.g., the statue near Bijicheng - the “Brush-rest wall” - in Changde, Hunan..

Mazu, also spelt **Matsu** and **Ma-tsu**, is the Chinese patron goddess who is said to protect seafarers, such as fishermen and sailors. The worship of Mazu began in the Song dynasty. Mazu is widely worshiped in the coastal regions of China, especially in Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Hainan. She is also worshiped in Taiwan and other places in East/Southeast Asia. Her birthplace

was Meizhou in Putian County, Fujian Province. She was born in the year 960. Her family had the surname Lin. She had the name Lin Moniang. She died on 4 October 987. After her death, she was remembered as a young lady in a red dress, who would forever roam over the seas.



The tallest Mazu statue in the world, Xinxu, Taoyuan City, Taiwan

According to legend, Lin Moniang was born on March 23, 960 (during the Song Dynasty) as the seventh daughter of Lin Yuan on Meizhou Island, Fujian. She did not cry when she was born, thus she was given the name with the meaning “Silent Girl.” Although she started swimming relatively late at the age of 15, she soon became an excellent swimmer. She wore red garments while standing on the shore to guide fishing boats home, even in the most dangerous and harsh weather.

Lin Moniang’s father and brothers were fishermen. One day, a terrible typhoon arose while they were out at sea, and the rest of her family feared that those at sea had perished. In the midst of this storm, depending on the version of the legend, she fell into a trance while praying for the lives of her father and brothers or dreamed of her father and brothers while she was sleeping or sitting at a loom weaving. In both versions of the story, her father and brother were drowning but Moniang’s mother discovered her sleeping and tried to wake her. This diverted Moniang’s attention and caused her to drop her brother who drowned as a result. Consequently, Moniang’s father returned alive and told the other villagers that a miracle had happened. Other versions of the story relate to four drowning brothers, with three returning and the fourth lost to her being revived (with no mention of a father).

There are at least two versions of Lin Moniang's death. In one version, she died in 987 at the age of 28, when she climbed a mountain alone and flew to heaven and became a goddess. Another version of the legend says that she died at age 16 of exhaustion after swimming far into the ocean trying to find her lost father and that her corpse later washed ashore on Nankan Island of the Matsu Islands.

Mazu is usually depicted together with two guardian generals known as "Thousand Miles Eye" (Qianli Yan) and "With-the-Wind Ear" (Shunfeng Er). Though their iconography can vary, both are usually represented as demons; "Thousand Miles Eye" is often red with one horn, while "With-the-Wind Ear" is green with two horns. They are said to have been two demons that Mazu conquered. Both of them were in love with her, but she said she would marry the one who defeated her. Using her martial arts skills, Mazu defeated them both and they became her friends.

Mazu herself is usually depicted wearing a red robe in paintings or murals, but in sculpture is always clothed in the jewel-festooned robes of an empress holding either a ceremonial tablet or a jeweled staff whilst wearing the easily recognized flat-topped imperial cap with hanging beads at the front and back.

Over time, the religions of Buddhism and Taoism borrowed popular deities from each other in attempts to attract devotees to their temples. In order to justify Mazu's presence in Buddhist temples, legends were circulated claiming that Mazu's parents prayed to Guan Yin for a son, but Guanyin answered their prayers with the birth of yet another daughter. It was then believed that Mazu was a reincarnation of Guanyin on earth, and it is Guanyin she is said to have been especially devoted to as a child. As a result, Mazu is recognized and respected in both the Taoist and Buddhist pantheons of deities, while some Buddhists believe Mazu to be one of Guanyin's many manifestations.

In Chinese mythology, **Longmu** ("**Mother of Dragons**") was a Chinese woman who was deified as a goddess after raising five infant dragons. Longmu and her dragons developed a strong bond for each other, and have thus become an example of filial devotion and parental love, an important virtue in Chinese culture.

Longmu's historic name was Wen Shi. She was born in 290 BC (during the Qin Dynasty) in Guangdong province, near the Xi River. Her family's ancestral home was in the Teng County in Guangxi province. She was the second of three daughters of Wen Tianrui and Liang Shi.

Wen Shi frequently went to the Xi River to fish and wash clothes for her family. On one such errand, she found a large smooth white stone along the banks of the river. She took the beautiful stone home, but later discovered that the stone was actually an egg, from which hatched five baby snakes (an alternate version says one). Wen Shi's family was poor, but Wen Shi saved the best food she had for her baby snakes and fed them by hand. As the snakes grew, they helped Wen Shi catch fish at the Xi River. The snakes were natural swimmers and became very good at catching fish.

The snakes eventually matured into five powerful dragons. In Chinese culture, dragons are considered spirits of water, and have the power to control the weather; during a drought, therefore, Wen Shi asked her dragon children to summon the rain for her village. When rain came and ended the drought, the grateful villagers gave Wen Shi the name "Mother of Dragons" or "Divine Human".

Qin Shihuang, the Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, received word of Wen Shi and her dragons. The Emperor sent her gifts of gold and jade and requested her presence at Xianyang, the imperial capital city near the Yellow River, far to the north. By this time, Wen Shi was an elderly woman in frail health. Her adult dragons feared for her safety and did not want her to travel so far from her village. Wen Shi boarded a boat to comply with the Emperor's commandment, but her dragons hid under the boat and dragged the boat backward so that the boat could never pass Guilin. Eventually, the frustrated imperial officials relented and allowed Wen Shi to remain home.

After Wen Shi died, the dragons were overwhelmed by sadness and took human form, becoming known as the Five Scholars, who buried her on the northern side of Zhu Mountain.

Everyone who heard the story of Longmu was touched by the filial devotion of the dragons. During the early Han Dynasty, the Xiaotong Temple, later known as the Longmu Ancestral Temple, was built in her honor. The temple is in Yuecheng in Deqing County of Guangdong province. It features calligraphy dedicated to the goddess written by the Emperor Hong Wu of the Ming Dynasty. The temple remains very popular and has been renovated 13 times over the centuries, most recently in 1905-1912 and 1985.

Another temple dedicated to Longmu is the Baisha Temple in Zhaoqing, south of the Xi River in the Ruizhou District, also in Guangdong province. The temple was built in 1587, but it is not as well preserved as the Xiaotong Temple. The city declared the temple a cultural site in 1982. Longmu's festival

is in the first week of the fifth month of the Chinese Lunar Calendar. She is a patron goddess of parents and children, and remains a popular deity throughout China.

In Chinese mythology, **Lei Gong** ("Lord of Thunder") or **Lei Shen** is the Chinese traditional religious and Taoist deity. In Taoism, when so ordered by heaven, Lei Gong punishes both earthly mortals guilty of secret crimes and evil spirits who have used their knowledge of Taoism to harm human beings. He carries a drum and mallet to produce thunder, and a chisel to punish evildoers. Lei Gong rides a chariot driven by a young boy named **A Xiang**. Lei Gong is depicted as a fearsome creature with claws, bat wings, and a blue face with a bird's beak who wears only a loincloth. Temples dedicated to him are rare, but some people honor him in the hope that he will take revenge on their personal enemies.

Since Lei Gong's power is thunder, he has assistants capable of producing other types of heavenly phenomena. **Dian Mu** (Mother of Lightning), also known as **Tian Mu** or **Lei Zi**, is Lei Kung's wife and the Goddess of Lightning, who is said to have used flashing mirrors to send bolts of lightning across the sky. Other companions are **Yun Tong** (Cloud Youth), who whips up clouds, and Yu Zi (Rain Master) who causes downpours by dipping his sword into a pot. Roaring winds rush forth from a type of goatskin bag manipulated by Feng Bo (Earl of Wind), who was later transformed into Feng Po Po (Lady Wind)

Lei Gong began life as a mortal. While on earth, he encountered a peach tree that originated from Heaven during the struggle between the Fox Demon and one of the Celestial Warriors. When Lei Gong took a bite out of one of its fruit he was transformed into his godly form. He soon received a mace and a hammer that could create thunder. Lei Gong is said to be extremely prudish, and will not enter a house where copulation is taking place.

Meng Po (Old Lady Meng) is the Lady of Forgetfulness in Chinese mythology.

Meng Po serves in Diyu, the Chinese realm of the dead, in the 10th court. It is her task to ensure that souls who are ready to be reincarnated do not remember their previous life or their time in hell. To this end she collects herbs from various earthly ponds and streams to make her Five Flavored Tea of Forgetfulness (waters of oblivion). This is given to each soul to drink before they leave Diyu. The brew induces instant and permanent amnesia, and all memory of other lives is lost. Having been purged of all previous sins and knowledge, the dead spirit is sent to be reborn in a new earthly incarnation,

and the cycle begins again. Occasionally people are able to avoid drinking the brew, resulting in past life memories surfacing in children.

Nezha is a protection deity in Chinese folk religion. His official Taoist name is “Marshal of the Central Altar”. He was then given the title “Third Lotus Prince” after he became a deity. According to Fengshen Yanyi, Nezha was born during the Shang dynasty in a military fortress at Chentang Pass. His father was a military commander named Li Jing, who later became the “Pagoda-wielding Heavenly King”. Nezha’s mother, Lady Yin, gave birth to a ball of flesh after being pregnant with him for three years and six months. Li Jing thought that his wife had given birth to a demon and attacked the ball with his sword. The ball split open and Nezha jumped out as a boy instead of an infant. Nezha could speak and walk immediately after birth. He was later accepted by the immortal Taiyi Zhenren as a student. He had two older brothers, Jinzha, a disciple of Wenshu Guangfa Tianzun, and Muzha.

One day, the people of Chentang Pass asked for rain, and sacrificed much food to the East Sea Dragon King Ao Guang. The King rejected the food and required instead girls and boys to eat. He sent Ye Sha to capture for him a girl and boy. Nezha and two other children were playing by the sea when Ye Sha appeared and captured one of Nezha’s friends. Nezha then fought him and injured him severely, causing him to return to the King and beg for someone else to take care of Nezha. The Dragon King sent Ao Bing, his third son, but the latter was slain by Nezha. Ao Guang called for his brothers and confronted Nezha and his family. He threatened to flood Chentang Pass and report Nezha to the Jade Emperor. To save his family and the people, Nezha committed suicide himself carving up his own flesh and dismembering his bones “returning” these to his parents in repayment for the debt of his birth. The Dragon Kings then hosted a huge celebration.

After Nezha had committed suicide to return his body to his parents, he appeared in his mother’s dream. In the dream, he asked her to build a temple for him, so that his soul would have a place to rest. This constitutes a link to Nezha’s birth because the night before Nezha was born, Lady Yin had a dream where a Taoist put something into her bosom and told her to take this child. For both incidences, a dream was used to communicate a message.

His mother then secretly built a temple for Nezha and this temple later flourished. This temple became very well known and grew vastly because Nezha granted miracle cures to the sick and the crippled. However, Li Jing soon found out about this temple and burnt it down because he was still

angry at Nezha and felt that he had already caused too much trouble for their family.

Li Jing burning the temple caused Nezha to desire his father's death. Thus, enmity between father and son grew. Nezha was later brought back to life by his teacher, Taiyi Zhenren, who used lotus roots to construct a human body for his soul and gave him two new weapons: the Wind Fire Wheels and the Fire-tipped Spear. Nezha then defeated the Dragon Kings. With the reincarnation of Nezha by his master, Li Jing and Nezha fought many battles. However, Li Jing soon realized that his mortal body was no match for Nezha and so he ran for his life. On the run, he met his second son, Muzha, who fought and was defeated by Nezha. At this, Li Jing tried to commit suicide but was saved by Wenshu Guangfa Tianzun, who also contained Nezha. In the end, Nezha was forced to submit to his father by another deity, Randeng Daoren.

Nezha is often depicted as a youth, instead of an adult. He is often shown flying in the sky riding on the Wind Fire Wheels, has the Universe Ring around his body (sometimes in his left hand), the Red Armillary Sash around his shoulders and a Fire-tipped Spear in his right hand. Sometimes, he is shown in his "three heads and six arms" form. He has the ability to spit rainbows in some legends.

Pangu is the first living being and the creator of all in some versions of Chinese mythology. The first writer to record the myth of Pangu was Xu Zheng during the Three Kingdoms period. Recently his name was found in a tomb dated 194 AD.

In the beginning there was nothing in the universe except a formless chaos. This chaos coalesced into a cosmic egg for about 18,000 years. Within it, the perfectly opposed principles of Yin and Yang became balanced, and Pangu emerged (or woke up) from the egg. Pangu is usually depicted as a primitive, hairy giant who has horns on his head and wears furs. Pangu began creating the world: he separated Yin from Yang with a swing of his giant axe, creating the Earth (murky Yin) and the Sky (clear Yang). To keep them separated; Pangu stood between them and pushed up the Sky. With each day the sky grew ten feet (3 meters) higher, the Earth ten feet thicker, and Pangu ten feet taller. In some versions of the story, Pangu is aided in this task by the four most prominent beasts, namely the Turtle, the Qilin, the Phoenix, and the Dragon.

After the 18,000 years had elapsed, Pangu died. His breath became the wind, mist and clouds; his voice, thunder; his left eye, the sun; his right eye,

the moon; his head, the mountains and extremes of the world; his blood, rivers; his muscles, fertile land; his facial hair, the stars and Milky Way; his fur, bushes and forests; his bones, valuable minerals; his bone marrow, sacred diamonds; his sweat, rain; and the fleas on his fur carried by the wind became animals.

The goddess Nüwa then used yellow clay to form humans. These humans were very smart since they were individually crafted. Nüwa then became tired of individually making every human, so she dipped a rope in mud and the blobs that fell from it became new humans. These new humans were not as smart as the original ones.

Three main views describe the origin of the Pangu myth. The first is that the story is indigenous and was developed or transmitted through time to Xu Zheng. Senior Scholar Wei Juxian states that the Pangu story is derived from stories during the Western Zhou Dynasty. He cites the story of Zhong and Li in the “Chuyu” section of the ancient classics Guoyu. In it, King Zhao of Chu asked Guanshefu a question: “What did the ancient classic “Zhou Shu” means by the sentence that Zhong and Li caused the heaven and earth to disconnect from each other?” The “Zhou Shu” sentence he refers to is about an earlier person, Luu Xing, who converses with King Mu of Zhou. King Mu’s reign is much earlier and dates to about 1001 to 946 BC. In their conversation, they discuss a “disconnection” between heaven and earth.

Nüwa, also known as **Nügua**, is a goddess in ancient Chinese mythology best known for creating mankind and repairing the pillar of heaven. The Huainanzi relates Nüwa to the time when Heaven and Earth were in disruption: Going back to more ancient times, the four pillars were broken; the nine provinces were in tatters. Heaven did not completely cover [the earth]; Earth did not hold up [Heaven] all the way around [its circumference]. Fires blazed out of control and could not be extinguished; water flooded in great expanses and would not recede. Ferocious animals ate blameless people; predatory birds snatched the elderly and the weak. Thereupon, Nüwa smelted together five-colored stones in order to patch up the azure sky, cut off the legs of the great turtle to set them up as the four pillars, killed the black dragon to provide relief for Ji Province, and piled up reeds and cinders to stop the surging waters. The azure sky was patched; the four pillars were set up; the surging waters were drained; the province of Ji was tranquil; crafty vermin died off; blameless people [preserved their] lives.

The catastrophes were supposedly caused by the battle between the deities Gonggong and Zhuanxu (an event that was mentioned earlier in the

Huainanzi), the five-colored stones symbolize the essence of the five phases (wood, fire, earth, metal, and water), the black dragon was the essence of water and thus cause of the floods, Ji province represents the central regions (the Sinitic world). Following this, the Huainanzi tells about how the sage-rulers Nüwa and Fuxi set order over the realm by following the way and its potency

Sun Wukong, also known as the **Monkey King**, is a main character in the Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West*. Sun Wukong is also found in many later stories and adaptations. In the novel, he is a monkey born from a stone who acquires supernatural powers through Taoist practices. After rebelling against heaven and being imprisoned under a mountain by the Buddha, he later accompanies the monk Xuanzang on a journey to retrieve Buddhist sutras from India.

Sun Wukong possesses an immense amount of strength; he is able to lift his 13,500 jīn (7,960 kilograms (17,550 lb)) staff with ease. He is also extremely fast, able to travel 108,000 li (54,000 kilometres (34,000 mi)) in one somersault. Sun knows 72 transformations, which allow him to transform into various animals and objects; however, he is troubled in transforming into other forms, due to the accompanying incomplete transformation of his tail. Sun Wukong is a skilled fighter, capable of holding his own against the best warriors of heaven. Also, each of his hairs possess magical properties, capable of being transformed into clones of the Monkey King himself, and/or into various weapons, animals, and other objects. He also knows spells that can command wind, part water, conjure protective circles against demons, and freeze humans, demons, and gods alike. One of the most enduring Chinese literary characters, Sun Wukong has a varied background and colorful cultural history. For example, Sun Wukong is considered by some scholars to be influenced by both the Hindu deity Hanuman from the *Ramayana* and elements of Chinese folklore.



According to the legend, Sun Wukong, or Monkey King, was born from a magic stone that sat on the top of a mountain that had been receiving the

powers of the heavens and the earth since the beginning of time and had thereby gained miraculous powers. The stone stood 36 feet and 5 inches representing the degrees of the heavens and 24 feet round representing the division of the solar calendar, with nine holes in it for the nine trigrams. The stone developed a magic womb, which burst open one day to produce a stone egg about the size of a ball.

When the wind blew on this egg it turned into a stone monkey complete with the five senses and four limbs. When the stone monkey came out, he already had the ability to crawl and walk. He then bowed to each of the four quarters. As his eyes moved, two beams of golden light shot towards the Pole Star palace and startled the Supreme Heavenly Sage, the Greatly Compassionate Jade Emperor of the Azure Vault of Heaven, who was sitting surrounded by his immortal ministers on his throne in the Hall of Miraculous Mist in the Golden-gated Cloud Palace. When he saw the dazzling golden light he ordered Thousand-mile Eye and Wind-accompanying Ear to open the Southern Gate of Heaven and take a look. The two officers went out through the gate in obedience to the imperial command, and while one observed what was going on the other listened carefully. Soon afterwards they reported back:

“In obedience to the Imperial Mandate your subjects observed and listened to the source of the golden light. We found that at the edge of the country of Aolai, which is East of the ocean belonging to the Eastern Continent of Superior Body, there is an island called the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. A magic stone on the top of this mountain produced a magic egg, and when the wind blew on this egg it turned into a stone monkey which bowed to each of the four quarters. When he moved his eyes, golden light shot towards the Pole Star Palace; but now that he is eating and drinking, the golden light is gradually dying.” In his benevolence and mercy the Jade Emperor said, “Creatures down below are born of the essence of heaven and earth: there is nothing remarkable about him.”

On his mountain the monkey was able to run and jump just when he came out, feed from plants and trees, drink from brooks and springs, pick mountain flowers and look for fruit. He made friends with the wolves, went around with the tigers and leopards, was on good terms with the deer, and had the other monkeys and apes for relations. At night he slept under the rockfaces, and he roamed around the peaks and caves by day. As the saying so rightly goes, “There is no calendar in the mountains, and when winter’s over you don’t know the time of year.” On hot mornings he and all the other monkeys would play under the shade of some pines to avoid the heat. After

playing, the monkeys would go and bathe in the stream, a mountain torrent that tumbled along like rolling melons. There is an old saying, "Birds have bird language and, animals have animal talk."

All the monkeys said to each other, "I wonder where that water comes from. We've got nothing else to do today, so wouldn't it be fun to go upstream and find its source?" With a shout they all ran off, leading their children and calling to their brothers. They climbed up the mountain beside the stream until they reached its source, where a waterfall cascaded from a spring. The monkeys clapped their hands and explained with delight, "Wow! So this is where the stream water comes from!"

Then one monkey made a suggestion: "If anyone is clever enough to go through the fall, find the source, and come out in one piece, let's make him our king." When this challenge had been shouted three times, the stone monkey leapt out from the crowd and answered at the top of his voice, "I'll go, I'll go." He then shuts his eyes, crouches, and springs, leaping straight into the waterfall. When he opened his eyes and raised his head to look round, he saw neither water nor waves. A bridge stood in front of him, as large as life. He stopped, calmed himself, took a closer look, and saw that the bridge was made of iron. The water that rushed under it poured out through a fissure in the rocks, screening the gateway to the bridge. He started walking towards the bridge, and as he looked he made out what seemed to be a house. It was a really good place. The other monkeys were all so delighted to hear this that they said, "You go first and take us with you."

The stone monkey shut his eyes, crouched, and leapt in again, shouting, "Follow me in, and follow me in." The braver monkeys all jumped through. The more timid ones peered forward, shrank back, rubbed their ears, scratched their cheeks, shouted, and yelled at the top of their voices, before going in, all clinging to each other. After rushing across the bridge they all grabbed plates and snatched bowls, bagged stoves and fought over beds, and moved everything around. Monkeys are born naughty and they could not keep quiet for a single moment until they had worn themselves out moving things around.

An old monkey soon said, "Monkeys, you all agreed and said that if anyone was clever enough to come in here and get out again in one piece, you'd make him king. Well, the stone monkey has come in and gone out, and gone out and come in. He has found you monkeys, a cave heaven where you can sleep in peace and all settle down to live in bliss. Why haven't you made him king?" On hearing this all the monkeys bowed down to the king.

They lined up in groups in order of age and paid their homage as at court, all acclaiming him as the “Great King of a Thousand Years.” The stone monkey then took the throne, made the word “stone” taboo, and called himself Handsome Monkey King.

At the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, Sun Wukong established himself as one of the most powerful and influential demons in the world. In search of a weapon worthy of himself, Sun Wukong traveled into the oceans, where he acquired the Golden-banded staff Ruyi Jingu Bang, which could change its size, multiply itself, and fight according to the whim of its master. It was originally used by Dà-Yǔ to measure ocean depth and later became the “Pillar that pacifies the oceans”, a treasure of Ao Guang, the “dragon-king of the Eastern Seas”. It weighed 13,500 jin (8.1 tons). Upon Sun Wukong’s approach, the pillar started to glow, signifying that it had found its true master. Its versatility meant that Sun Wukong could wield it as a staff and keep it inside his ear as a sewing needle. This drove fear into the magical beings of the sea and threw the sea itself into confusion, since nothing but the pillar could control the ebb and flow of the ocean’s tides. In addition to taking the magical staff, Wukong also defeated the dragons of the four seas in battle and forced them to give him a golden chain mail shir, a phoenix-feather cap, and cloud-walking boots.

Upon his triumphant return, he demonstrated the new weapon to his followers, growing his size in proportion to the original length of the staff. The uproar drew attention of other beastly powers who sought to ally with him. Sun Wukong formed a fraternity with the Bull Demon King, the Saurian Demon King, the Roc Demon King, the Lion Spirit King, the Macaque Spirit King and the Snub-nosed monkey Spirit King. Sun Wukong then defied Hell’s attempt to collect his soul. Instead of reincarnating like all other living beings, he wiped his name out of the “Book of Life and Death” and with it the names of all other monkeys known to him. The Dragon Kings and the Kings of Hell then decided to report him to the Jade Emperor of Heaven.

Hoping that a promotion and a rank amongst the gods would make him more manageable, the Jade Emperor invited Sun Wukong to Heaven, where the monkey believed he would receive an honorable place as one of the gods. Instead, he was made the Protector of the Horses to watch over the stables, which was the lowest job in heaven. When he discovered this, Sun Wukong rebelled and proclaimed himself the “Great Sage, Equal of Heaven”. He then got revenge by setting the Cloud Horses free. The Heavens’ initial attempt at subduing the Monkey King was unsuccessful, and they were forced to recognize his title; however, they tried again to put him off as the guardian

of Heavenly Garden. When he found that he was excluded from a royal banquet that included every other important god and goddess, Sun Wukong's indignation again turned to open defiance. After stealing and consuming Xi Wangmu's "peaches of immortality", Laozi's "pills of longevity", and the Jade Emperor's royal wine, he escaped back to his kingdom in preparation for his rebellion.

Sun Wukong later single-handedly defeated the Army of Heaven's 100,000 celestial warriors - each fight an equivalent of a cosmic embodiment, including all 28 constellations, four heavenly kings, and Nezha, the son of Li Jiang Jun who proved himself worthy - and proved himself equal to the best of Heaven's generals, Erlang Shen. Eventually, through the teamwork of Taoist and Buddhist forces, including the efforts from some of the greatest deities, and then finally by Bodhisattva of mercy, Guanyin, Sun Wukong was captured. After several failed attempts at execution, Sun Wukong was locked into Laozi's eight-way trigram Crucible to be distilled into an elixir, (so that Laozi could regain his "pills of longevity"), by the most sacred and the most severe samadhi fires. After 49 days, however, when the cauldron was opened, Sun Wukong jumped out, stronger than ever before. He now had the ability to recognize evil in any form through his *huǒyǎn-jīnjīng* (golden-gaze fiery-eyes), an eye condition that also gave him a weakness to smoke, and proceeded to destroy Heaven's remaining forces.

With all of their options exhausted, the Jade Emperor and the authorities of Heaven appealed to the Buddha, who arrived from his temple in the West. The Buddha made a bet with Sun Wukong that Sun Wukong could not escape from Buddha's palm. Sun Wukong, knowing that he could cover 108,000 li in one leap, smugly agreed. He took a great leap and then flew to the end of the world in seconds. Nothing was visible except for five pillars, and Wukong surmised that he had reached the ends of Heaven. To prove his trail, he marked the pillars with a phrase declaring him "the great sage equal to heaven" (and in other versions, urinated on the pillar he signed on). Afterward, he leaped back and landed in the Buddha's palm. There, he was surprised to find that the five "pillars" he had found were in fact the five fingers of the Buddha's hand. When Wukong tried to escape, the Buddha turned his hand into a mountain. Before Wukong could shrug it off, the Buddha sealed him there using a paper talisman on which was written the mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* in gold letters, wherein Sun Wukong remained imprisoned for five centuries.

Five centuries later, the Bodhisattva Guanyin went out in search for disciples who could protect a pilgrim from the East to journey to India to

retrieve the Buddhist sutras. In hearing this, Sun Wukong offered to serve this pilgrim, Xuanzang, a monk of the Tang Dynasty, in exchange for his freedom after the pilgrimage was complete. Guanyin understood that the monkey would be hard to control, and therefore gave Xuanzang a gift from the Buddha: a magical headband which, once Sun Wukong was tricked into putting it on himself, could never be removed. With a special chant, the band would tighten and cause unbearable pain to the monkey's head. To be fair, Guanyin also gave Sun Wukong three special hairs, which could be used in dire emergencies. Under Xuanzang's supervision, Sun Wukong was allowed to journey to the West.

Throughout the epic novel *Journey to the West*, Sun Wukong faithfully helped Xuanzang on his journey to India. They were joined by "Piggy" (Zhu Bajie) and "Sandy" (Sha Wujing), both of whom offered to accompany the priest in order to atone for their previous crimes. It was later revealed that the priest's horse was in fact a dragon prince. Xuanzang's safety was constantly under threat from demons and other supernatural beings (some who believed that his flesh, once consumed, would bring them longevity, and others who did not want him to succeed with his quest to obtain the scriptures), as well as from bandits, so Sun Wukong often acted as his bodyguard and was given free access to the powers of Heaven to combat these threats. The group encountered a series of eighty-one tribulations before accomplishing their mission and returning safely to China. There, Sun Wukong was granted Buddhahood for his service and strength.

Tam Kung (Lord Tam) or **Tam Tai Sin** is a sea deity worshiped in Hong Kong and Macau. In Chinese folk legends, Tam Kung was one of gods who could forecast the weather. He was born in Huizhou Prefecture. It was said that he could cure patients in his childhood. Tam Kung became an immortal in heaven at the age of twenty in the Nine-dragon Mountain in Huizhou. He was granted an honor in the Qing Dynasty. People whose ancestral home is in Huizhou or Chaoshan of Guangdong province worship Tam Kung most sincerely.

The **Qixi Festival**, also known as the **Qiqiao Festival**, is a Chinese festival that celebrates the annual meeting of the cowherd and weaver girl in Chinese mythology. It falls on the seventh day of the 7th month on the Chinese calendar. It is sometimes called the Double Seventh Festival, the Chinese Valentine's Day, the Night of Sevens, or the Magpie Festival. The festival originated from the romantic legend of two lovers, Zhinü and Niulang, who were the weaver maid and the cowherd, respectively. The tale of The Weaver Girl and the Cowherd has been celebrated in the Qixi Festival since the Han Dynasty. The

earliest-known reference to this famous myth dates back to over 2600 years ago, which was told in a poem from the Classic of Poetry. The Qixi festival inspired Tanabata festival in Japan, Chilseok festival in Korea, Thất Tịch festival in Vietnam.

The general tale is about a love story between Zhinü (the weaver girl, symbolizing Vega) and Niulang (the cowherd, symbolizing Altair). Their love was not allowed, thus they were banished to opposite sides of the Silver River (symbolizing the Milky Way). Once a year, on the 7th day of the 7th lunar month, a flock of magpies would form a bridge to reunite the lovers for one day. There are many variations of the story. A variation follows:

A young cowherd, hence Niulang (cowherd), came across a beautiful girl—Zhinü (weavergirl), the Goddess's seventh daughter, who had just escaped from boring heaven to look for fun. Zhinü soon fell in love with Niulang, and they got married without the knowledge of the Goddess. Zhinü proved to be a wonderful wife, and Niulang to be a good husband. They lived happily and had two children. But the Goddess of Heaven (or in some versions, Zhinü's mother) found out that Zhinü, a fairy girl, had married a mere mortal. The Goddess was furious and ordered Zhinü to return to heaven. (Alternatively, the Goddess forced the fairy back to her former duty of weaving colorful clouds, a task she neglected while living on earth with a mortal.) On Earth, Niulang was very upset that his wife had disappeared. Suddenly, his ox began to talk, telling him that if he killed it and put on its hide, he would be able to go up to Heaven to find his wife. Crying bitterly, he killed the ox, put on the skin, and carried his two beloved children off to Heaven to find Zhinü. The Goddess discovered this and was very angry. Taking out her hairpin, the Goddess scratched a wide river in the sky to separate the two lovers forever, thus forming the Milky Way between Altair and Vega. Zhinü must sit forever on one side of the river, sadly weaving on her loom, while Niulang watches her from afar while taking care of their two children (his flanking stars β and γ Aquilae or by their Chinese names Hè Gu 1 and Hè Gu 3). But once a year all the magpies in the world would take pity on them and fly up into heaven to form a bridge (the bridge of magpies, Que Qiao) over the star Deneb in the Cygnus constellation so the lovers may be together for a single night, which is the seventh night of the seventh moon.

Young girls take part in worshiping the celestials during rituals. They go to the local temple to pray to Zhinü for wisdom. Paper items are usually burned as offerings. Girls may also recite traditional prayers for dexterity in needlework, which symbolize the traditional talents of a good spouse. Divination could

take place to determine possible dexterity in needlework. They make wishes for marrying someone who would be a good and loving husband. During the festival, girls make a display of their domestic skills. Traditionally, there would be contests amongst young girls who attempted to be the best in threading needles under low-light conditions like the glow of an ember or a half moon. Today, girls sometimes gather toiletries in honor of the seven maidens.

The festival also held an importance for newly-wed couples. Traditionally, they would worship the celestial couple for the last time and bid farewell to them. The celebration stood symbol for a happy marriage and showed that the married woman was treasured by her new family. During this festival, a festoon is placed in the yard. Single and newly-wed women make offerings to Niulang and Zhinü, which may include fruit, flowers, tea, and face powder. After finishing the offerings, half of the face powder is thrown on the roof and the other half divided among the young women. It is believed that by doing this, the women are bound in beauty with Zhinü. Tales say that it will rain on this fateful day if there's crying in heaven. Other tales say that you can hear the lovers talking if you stand under grapevines on this night.

On this day, the Chinese gaze to the sky to look for Vega and Altair shining in the Milky Way, while a third star forms a symbolic bridge between the two stars. It was said that if it rains on this day that it was caused by a river sweeping away the magpie bridge, or that the rain is the tears of the separated couple. Based on the legend of a flock of magpies forming a bridge to reunite the couple, a pair of magpies came to symbolize conjugal happiness and faithfulness.

The **Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors** were a group of mythological rulers and deities from ancient China during the period circa 2852 BC to 2070 BC, today considered culture heroes. According to received history, this period preceded the Xia Dynasty.

In myth, the Three Sovereigns were demigods who used their abilities to help create mankind and impart to them essential skills and knowledge. The Five Emperors were exemplary sages who possessed great moral character. Depending on the source, there are many variations of who classifies as the Three Sovereigns or the Five Emperors. There are six to seven known variations. Many of the sources listed below were written from much later dynasties.

The following appear in different groupings of the Three Sovereigns: Fuxi, Nüwa, Shennong, Suiren, Zhurong, Gong Gong, Heavenly Sovereign, Earthly

Sovereign, Tai Sovereign, Human Sovereign, and even the Yellow Emperor. The following appear in different groupings of the Five Emperors: Yellow Emperor, Zhuanxu, Emperor Ku, Emperor Yao, Shun, Shaohao, Taihao, and Emperor Yan.

The **Three Pure Ones** (Sānqīng) also translated as the **Three Pure Pellucid Ones**, the **Three Pristine Ones**, the **Three Divine Teachers**, the **Three Clarities**, or the **Three Purities** are the Taoist Trinity, the three highest Gods in the Taoist pantheon. They are regarded as pure manifestation of the Tao and the origin of all sentient beings. From the Taoist classic Tao Te Ching, it was held that “The Tao produced one; one produced two; two produced Three; three produced all things.” It is generally agreed that: Tao produced one - Wuji produced Taiji; one produced Two - Taiji produced Yin and Yang [or Liangyi in scholastic term]. However, the subject of how two produced Three has remained a popular debate among Taoist Scholars. Most scholars believe that it refers to the Interaction between Yin and Yang, with the presence of Chi, or life force.

In religious Taoism, the theory of how Tao produces One, Two, and Three is also explained. In Tao produces One - Wuji produces Taiji, it represents the Great Tao, embodied by Hùndùn Wújí Yuánshǐ Tiānwáng (Heavenly King of the Chaotic Never-ending Primordial Beginning) at a time of pre-Creation when the Universe was still null and the cosmos was in disorder; manifesting into the first of the Taoist Trinity, Yuánshǐ Tiānzūn. Yuánshǐ Tiānzūn oversees the earliest phase of Creation of the Universe, and is henceforth known as Dàobǎo, “Treasure of the Tao”. In One produces Two - Taiji produces Yin Yang, Yuanshi Tianzun manifests into Lingbao Tianzun who separated the Yang from the Yin, the clear from the murky, and classified the elements into their rightful groups. Therefore, he is also known as Jīngbǎo, “Treasure of the Law/Scripture”. While Jīng in popular understanding means “scriptures”, in this context it also mean “passing through” [the phase of Creation] and the Laws of Nature of how things are meant to be. In the final phase of Creation, Daode Tianzun is manifested from Língbǎo Tiānzūn to bring civilization and preach the Law to all living beings. Therefore, He is also known as Shībǎo, “Treasure of the Master”.

Each of the Three Pure Ones represents both a deity and a heaven. Yuanshi tianzun rules the first heaven, Yu-Qīng, which is found in the Jade Mountain. The entrance to this heaven is named the Golden Door. “He is the source of all truth, as the sun is the source of all light”. Lingbao Tianzun rules over the heaven of Shang-Qīng. Daode Tianzun rules over the heaven of Tai-Qīng. The Three Pure Ones are often depicted as throned elders.

Schools of Taoist thought developed around each of these deities. Taoist Alchemy was a large part of these schools, as each of the Three Pure Ones represented one of the three essential fields of the body: jing, qi and shen. The congregation of all three Pure Ones resulted in the return to Tao.

The first Pure One is universal or heavenly chi. The second Pure One is human plane chi, and the third Pure One is earth chi. Heavenly chi includes the chi or energy of all the planets, stars and constellations as well as the energy of God (the force of creation and universal love). Human plane chi is the energy that exists on the surface of our planet and sustains human life, and the earth force includes all of the forces inside the planet as well as the five elemental forces.



As the Three Pure Ones are manifestation of Primordial Celestial Energy, they are formless. But to illustrate their role in Creation, they are often portrayed as elderly deities robed in the three basic colours from which all colours originated: Red, Blue and Yellow (or Green) depending on personal interpretation of colour origins by additive or subtractive means. Each of them holds onto a divine object associated with their task. Yuánsǐ Tiānzūn is usually depicted holding the Pearl of Creation, signifying his role in creating the Universe from void and chaos. The Ruyi held by Lingbao Tianzun represents authority: the

second phase of Creation where the Yang was separated from the Yin and the Law of Things was ordered in place. Lingbao Tianzun then took his seat on the left of Yuanshi Tianzun. Later, when all was complete, Daode Tianzun took his place on the right, with the fan symbolizing the completion of Creation, and the act of fanning representing the spreading of Tao to all Mankind.

Tudigong or **Tudishen** (Lord of the Soil and the Ground, Social Body,) is a Chinese tutelary deity of a natural locality in Chinese folk religion and Taoism. A more formal name for Tudigong is **Fudezhengshen** (Right God of Blessing and Virtue), or **Fudegong** (Lord of Blessing and Virtue).

Tudigong is still worshipped by many Chinese in modern times, with many housing small shrines with his image, commonly located under the main altar, or below the house door. Many worshippers supplicate with the intention of

gaining wealth or maintaining their physical health. He is also traditionally worshipped before the burial of deceased persons to thank him for using his land to return their bodies to the earth. Commoners often call Tudigong “grandfather” (yeye), which reflects his close relationship with the common people. Tudigong is portrayed as an elderly man with a long white beard, a black or gold hat and a red or yellow robe, which signifies his position as a bureaucrat. He carries a wooden staff in his right hand and a golden ingot on the left.

Another story says that Tudipo is supposed to be a young lady. After Tudigong received a heavenly rank, he gave everything that the people asked for. When one of the gods went down to Earth to do inspections, he saw that Tudigong was distributing blessings unnecessarily. Soon after that, the god went to the Celestial Palace and reported to the Jade Emperor.



After the Jade Emperor knew this, he found out that there was a lady that was going to be killed, but she was not guilty. Thus, the Jade Emperor told a god to go down to Earth and bring the lady to heaven. When the lady was brought to the Celestial Palace, the Jade Emperor bestowed her to Tudigong as his wife. She was ordered to look after how many blessings Tudigong distributes and that they not be unnecessarily distributed. This is why many people do not want to pay respect to Tudipo, because they are afraid that she will not let Tudigong give lots of wealth to them.

The Landlord God (Dìzhǔ shén) is a deity worshipped in Chinese folk beliefs who is analogous but is not to be confused with Tudigong. The tablet for the Landlord God is typically inscribed with (middle two rows) “left: The Earth God of Overseas Tang People (overseas Chinese), right: The Dragon of Five Sides and Five Lands (fengshui). The side inscriptions mean “The wealth comes from ten thousand directions and the business comes from thousands of miles.” It is believed that the Landlord God has powers to help gather wealth, and the position of the tablet must be placed properly according to the laws of fengshui.

Village Gods

The Village God has developed from land worship. Before Chenghuangshen (City God) became more prominent in China, land worship had a hierarchy of deities conforming strictly to social structure, in which the emperor, kings, dukes, officials and common people were allowed to worship only the land gods within their command; the highest land deity was the Houtu (Queen of the Earth).

Ranked lower than City Gods, the Village Gods have been very popular among villagers as the grassroot deities since the 14th century during the Ming dynasty. Some scholars speculate that this change came because of an imperial edict, because it is reported that the Hongwu Emperor of the Ming dynasty was born in a Village God shrine. The image of the Village God is that of a simply clothed, smiling, white-bearded man. His wife, the Grandmother of the Village, looks like a normal old lady. In Taiwan, festivals dedicated to Tudigong typically take place on the second day of the second month and the 15th day of the eighth month on the Chinese lunar calendar.



Lingbao Tianzun (Lord of the Numinous Treasure) is also known as the “Supreme Pure One” (Shàngqīng) or “The Universally Honoured One of Divinities and Treasures”.

“In terms of worldview, the emergence of the Shàngqīng revelations signifies a major expansion of Taoism. Where the celestial masters had added the pure gods of the Tao to the popular pantheon, Shàngqīng enlarged this to include an entirely new layer of existence between the original, creative force of the Tao, represented by the deity “yuan shi tian wang” (heavenly king of primordial beginning), and created world as we know it. This celestial layer consisted of several different regions, located both in the far reaches of the world and in the stars, and imagined along the lines of the ancient paradises Penglai and Kunlun. It was populated by various divine figures: pure gods of the Tao who were emanations of original cosmic qi; immortals who had attained celestial status through effort and the proper elixir...”

Lingbao Tianzun is associated with yin and yang and was responsible as the custodian of the sacred book. Lingbao Tianzun also calculates time and divides it into different epochs.

Daode Tianzun (Lord of the Way and its Virtue or Honoured Lord of the Tao and the Virtue), also known as the “Grand Pure One” or the “Highest Elder Lord” (Taishang Laojun). It is believed that Daode Tianzun manifested himself in the form of Laozi. Daode Tianzun is also the treasurer of spirits, known as the Lord of Man who is the founder of Taoism. He is the most eminent, aged ruler, which is why he is the only Pure One depicted with a pure white beard.

“There seem to have been a number of stages in the process of Laozi’s eventual deification. First, the legendary figure began as a teacher and writer whose image eventually blended with that of the Yellow Emperor when Laozi came to be identified as a confidant of royalty. Traditional accounts, such as the life-story summarized earlier, transformed him into a cultural hero whose mother conceived him virginally. By the mid-second century C.E., Laozi had become the deity who delivered to Zhang Daoling the revelation of a new religious faith, giving rise to the Celestial Master’s school. His image was still not complete. Next, perhaps also around the second or third century CE, Laozi seems to have been identified as a creator god who also enters the world to rescue humanity from tribulation. Laozi was now capable of incarnating himself, almost like Buddhist bodhisattvas. Not long thereafter he joined the triad of the

Three Pure Ones, and finally Laozi emerged as the chief divine person. We have here one of the more interesting examples of apotheosis, or deification, in the history of religion.”^l

According to Daozang, Daode Tianzun had manifested many various incarnations to teach living beings, and Laozi is one of his incarnations.

Wenchang Wang, also known as **Wenchang Dijun** is a Taoist deity in Chinese Mythology, known as the God of Culture and Literature. He is also at times referred to simply as Wen Qu, or Wen. The literal translation of his name would be King of Flourishing Culture/Language. Wenchang Wang is physically represented by a constellation of six stars near the Big Dipper. The stars all had names of their own: Shangjiang, Cijiang, Guixiang, Siming, Sizhong, and Silu. Wenchang Wang is often depicted as an elderly scholar accompanied by two attendants, Tianlong (Heaven-Deaf) and Diya (Earth-Mute). He has historically been called upon by scholars and writers who need inspiration or help right before an exam.

There are quite a few accounts of Wenchang Wang; most depict him as a man by the name Zhang Yazi, of a county in Sichuan Province called Zitong. A particular account cites him as a war hero, having died an honorable death in a rebellion against Emperor Fú Jiān in 374. Other accounts of Wenchang Wang appear rather sporadically at different time periods; he has been given seventeen reincarnations over a period of 3,000 years. A notable account of an appearance of Wenchang Wang was as the Spirit of Zitong, during the suppression of a rebellion in Chengdu, Sichuan, in 1000 A.D. A man allegedly climbed a ladder in midst of battle and declared that the Spirit of Zitong told him the “town [of rebels] would fall on the twentieth day of the ninth moon.” The town fell on the day indicated, and the general in charge of repressing the rebellion had the temple repaired.

In addition to being a respected warrior, Wenchang Wang was well respected as a model for filiality. The Book of Emperor Zi Tong records: “Wenchang was had a mature mind at birth. His mother breastfed him even though she was perilously ill and malnourished. In the middle of the night, Wenchang cut flesh from his own thighs and fed it to his mother. She was then cured of her illness.”

Wenchang Wang also appears in other texts, where he is praised for other noble virtues. The book Wenchang Emperor and the States He Stabilized states: “He descended into the mortal world seventy-three times as a shidafu” (a scholar-bureaucrat position in the emperor’s government of feudal China).

Wenchang was uncorrupted, upright and just, and never dealt out harsh punishments to the people. He allegedly helps people when they have hardships, saves those who are in trouble, has compassion for the lonely, forgives people's mistakes, and leaves peace and stability everywhere he goes. Because of this, the Jade Emperor put him in charge of the elections of village leaders.



Wen Chang, God of Literature

There is controversy over the actual position of Wenchang, despite common practice of attributing him to Zhang Yazi. Many point out that the stories on Zhang Yazi are attributed mainly to honor and heroism, having nothing to do with actual literature. In his *Myths and Legends of China*, E.T.C. Werner points out that "Wherever Wenchang is worshiped there will also be found a separate representation of K'uei Hsing [Kui Xing], showing that while the official deity has been allowed to 'borrow glory' from the popular god, and even to assume his personality, the independent existence of the stellar spirit is nevertheless sedulously maintained." The story being that Zhang Kui (Kui Xing) was a brilliant scholar who was, because of his unsightly face, not recognized by the Emperor when he passed the top examinations. Feeling dejected, he threw himself into the ocean, and ascended into the heavens as a star. Initially, scholars worshiped this star, Kui Xing, as the God of Literature, but with time, he was eventually linked to the Dipper (constellation) or Great Bear, and assimilated into Wenchang Jundi.

Wenchang has had various titles, but was officially apotheosized by Yen Yu of the Mongol Dynasty in 1314 A.D as the Supporter of the Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty, Diffuser of Renovating Influences, Ssu-lu of Wenchang, God and Lord.

He is often called upon by scholars and students for academic help. There are many different temples and shrines dedicated to worshipping Wenchang Wang, the most notable being the Wenchang temple of Zitong, located at modern-day Qiqu Mountain. This famous mountain is both the location of the largest cypress forest in China as well as the origin of the Wenchang culture. As Sichuan (where Qiqu Mountain is located) is mainly in the south, there is a saying, "In the North there is Confucius and in the South there is Wenchang."

There are also two notable temples dedicated to worshipping Wenchang Di Jun in Taichung: one is in the Beitun District of Taichung, apparently constructed in 1863 as a means of facilitating learning in the developing groups of people there. The other temple is in the Nantun district of Taichung, built in 1825. Both temples face south, which is apparently due to a principle of Fung Shui.

The practice of worshipping Wenchang Wang has a long history; it was popular in the past because he was allowed to be venerated by the rich and poor alike. He is still often worshiped now for essentially the same reasons. The third day of the second moon of the Chinese lunar calendar is the birthday of Wenchang. People generally celebrated his birthday by visiting his temples, the officials and scholars of the county all had to go to the Temple of Wenchang to make offerings, sacrifices or recite poems.

Wong Tai Sin or Huang Da Xian is a Chinese deity popular in Jinhua, Zhejiang and Hong Kong with the power of healing. His name literally translates to the “Great Immortal Wong (Huang)”. Wong Tai Sin is the divine form of the individual **Huang Chuping or Wong Cho Ping**.

According to the text *Self-Description of Chisongzi* (Master Red Pine) kept at the Wong Tai Sin Temple in Hong Kong, Wong Tai Sin was born Wong Cho Ping (Huang Chuping in Mandarin pinyin) in 338 in Lanxi, Jinhua, Zhejiang province. Western sources have him listed at c. 284 to 364 CE.

Wong Cho Ping is said to have experienced poverty and hunger, becoming a shepherd when he was eight years old. He began practising Taoism at the age of fifteen after meeting an immortal or saintly person on Red Pine Mountain in his hometown. Legend has it that he was able to transform stones into sheep forty years later. Wong Tai Sin later became known as the **Red Pine Immortal**, after the mountain where he had his hermitage, and his birthday is celebrated on the 23rd of the eighth lunar month.

The **Queen Mother of the West or Xi Wangmu** is a Chinese goddess known from ancient times. The first historical information on her can be traced back to oracle bone inscriptions of the fifteenth century BC that record sacrifices to a “Western Mother”. (Cahill, 1993) Even though these inscriptions illustrate that she predates organized Taoism, she is most often associated with Taoism. From her name alone some of her most important characteristics are revealed: she is royal, female, and is associated with the west. (Benard, 2000) The growing popularity of the Queen Mother of the West, as well as the beliefs that she was the dispenser of prosperity, longevity, and eternal bliss

took place during the second century BCE when the northern and western parts of China were able to be better known because of the opening of the Silk Road.(Mair, 2006)



Xi Wangmu as depicted on a painting (detail) by Xie Wenli

Her official Taoist title is **Yaochi Jinmu** (Golden Mother of the Shining Lake). Tang dynasty writers call her Jinmu Yuanjun, Golden Mother of Tortoise Mountain, She of the Nine Numina and the Grand Marvel and the Perfected Marvel of the Western Florescence and the Ultimate Worthy of the Grotto Yin. Commoners and poets of the Tang dynasty referred to her more simply as Queen Mother, Divine Mother or by the ancient, familiar expression for “mother” or “nanny”, Amah. In modern times she is often called **Wangmu Niangniang**.

The first mentions of the Queen Mother date back to the oracle bone inscriptions of the Shang Dynasty (1766-1122 B.C.).

One inscription reads:

“Crack-making on day IX,9 day; we divined. if we make offering to the eastern mother and the western mother, there will be approval.”

Western Mother refers to an archaic divinity residing in the west. The exact nature of the Mother divinities in the Shang dynasty is unclear, but they were seen as powerful forces deserving of ritual by the people of the Shang dynasty.

Originally, from the earliest known depictions of her in the “Guideways of Mountains and Seas” during the Zhou Dynasty, she was a ferocious goddess with the teeth of a tiger, who sent Pestilence down upon the world. After she was adopted into the Taoist pantheon, she was transformed into the goddess of life and immortality.

One of the earliest written references to the Queen Mother comes from the writings of the Taoist writer Zhuangzi (c. fourth century B.C.):

“The Queen Mother of the West obtained it...” (_the Dao) “..._and took up her seat at Shao kuang. No one knows her beginning; no one knows her end.” (Benard, 2000)

Zhuangzi describes the Queen Mother as one of the highest of the deities, meaning she had gained immortality and celestial powers. Zhuangzi also states that Xiwangmu is seated upon a spiritual western mountain range, suggesting she is connected to not only the heavens, but also to the west.

During the Tang dynasty (June 18, 618-June 4, 907) poetry flourished throughout China (this period is commonly known as the “Golden age of Chinese poetry”). It was during this period that the Queen Mother became an extremely popular figure in poetry. Her mythology was recorded in the poems of the Quan Tangshi a collection of surviving poems (of an estimated 50,000 written during the period) from the Tang dynasty.

After the fall of the Tang dynasty, (around 910 - 920) a Shang-ching Taoist master and court chronicler named Du Guangting wrote a hagiographical biography of the queen mother as part of his text “Yung ch’eng chi hsien lu” (“Records of the Assembled Transcendents of the Fortified Walled City”). This account represents the most complete source of information about Tang society’s perceptions of Xīwángmǔ.

The Queen Mother of the West usually is depicted holding court within her palace on the mythological Mount Kunlun, usually supposed to be in western China (a modern Mount Kunlun is named after this). Her palace is believed to be a perfect and complete paradise, where it was used as a meeting place for the deities and a cosmic pillar where communications between deities and humans were possible. (Dien, 2003) At her palace she was surrounded by a

female retinue of prominent goddesses and spiritual attendants. Although not definite there are many beliefs that her garden had a special orchard of longevity peaches which would ripen once every three thousand years (Dien, 2003), others believe though that her court on Mount Kunlun was nearby to the orchard of the Peaches of Immortality. No matter where the peaches were located, the Queen Mother of the West is widely known for serving peaches to her guests, which would then make them immortal. She normally wears a distinctive headdress with the Peaches of Immortality suspended from it.

“Flourishing parasols, we reach the chronograms’ extremity; riding on the mist, I wander to Lofty Whirlwind Peak. The Lady of the Supreme Primordial descends through jade interior doors; The Queen Mother opens her Blue-gem Palace. Celestial people-What a Crowd! A lofty meeting inside the Cyan Audience Hall. Arrayed Attendants perform Cloud Songs; Realized intonations fill the Grand Empty Space. Every thousand years, her purple crabapple ripens; every four kalpas, her numinous melon produces abundantly. This music differs from that at the feast in the wilderness--- So convivial and certainly infinite” (Wu Yun. CTS. 4942).

King Mu of the Zhou Dynasty

Probably one of the best known stories of contact between a goddess and a mortal ruler is between King Mu of Zhou and the Queen Mother of the West. There are several different accounts of this story but they all agree that King Mu, one of the greatest rulers of the Zhou, set out on a trip with his eight chargers to the far western regions of his empire. As he obtains the eight chargers and has the circuit of his realm, it proves that he has the Mandate of Heaven. On his journey he encounters the Queen Mother of the West on the mythical Mount Kunlun. They then have a love affair, and King Mu hoping to obtain immortality, gives the Queen Mother important national treasures. In the end he must return to the human realm, and does not receive immortality. The relationship between the Queen Mother of the West and King Mu has been compared to that of Taoist master and disciple. (Bernard, 2000: 206) She passes on secret teaching to him at his request and he, the disciple, fails to benefit, and dies like any other mortal.

The First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty

The first emperor of the Qin Dynasty, Qin Shi Huang, united the Warring States of China through brilliant military strategy and diplomacy to control

the greatest territory ever yet seen in China. It was also under his command that workers joined pre-existing sections of wall to create the Great Wall of China. Even after these accomplishments he is known in history as a failure both as a king and as a seeker of immortality. Qin had the opportunity to meet the Queen Mother of the West and attain greatness from her, but instead wasted it (Bernard, 2000:207) and died without the Mandate of Heaven or a dynasty. His story of not jumping at the chance to meet the Queen Mother serves as a warning to later men, as despite huge and costly efforts to pursue immortality; he died and speaks no more. The ninth-century poet Zhuang Nanjie wrote:

“His flourishing breath once departed, he never more will speak;

His white bones buried deep, the evening mountains turn cyan” (Quan Tangshi, 2836)

Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty

As legend tells Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty and the Queen Mother of the West met during the height of Wu’s reign, when she visited him during the night of Double Seven, the night for encounters between mortal men and divine women.(Bernard, 2000) When the Queen Mother of the West visits Emperor Wu she shares a banquet with him, grants him special teachings, and then departs. Emperor Wu just like King Mu before him fails to follow her teachings, and fails to put them into practice, and therefore he inevitably dies. The whole story of their meeting is described in Li Qi’s long work the “Songs of the Queen Mother”:

“The Martial Illustrious One fasted and observed abstinence in his Basilica for Receiving Florescence; As he stood upright with folded hands, instantly the Queen Mother came to grant him an audience. Rainbow standards numinously flashing: her qilin-drawn chariots, with feathered parasols streaming and pheasant fans. Her fingers holding intertwined pears, she sent them along for the emperor to eat; By means of them one can prolong life and preside over the cosmos. On top of her head she wore the nine-starred crown; she led a flock of jade lads, and then sat facing south. “Do you want to hear my essential words? Now I’ll report them to you.” The emperor thereupon burned incense and requested such a discussion. “If you can rarefy your earth soul and dispatch the three corpses, afterward you will certainly have an audience with me at the Celestial Illustrious One’s palace.” Turning

her head back, she told the servant girl, Dong Shuangcheng, "The wind is finished; you may perform on the Cloud Harmony Mouth Organ." Red auroral clouds and the white sun, in strict attendance, did not move; seven dragons and five phoenixes in variegated disarray greeted them. How regrettable! He was too ambitious and arrogant; the divinities were not satisfied, but sighed and lamented over his horses' hooves and chariots' wheel tracks. In his covered walkways, song bells became hard to discern in the approaching evening; in the deep palace, peach and plum flowers turned snowy. Now I just look at my blue jade five-branched lamp; its coiled dragon spits fire as the light is about to be severed. (Quan Tangshi 750)

Because she was the embodiment of yin, highest goddess, and ruler of female Transcendents, The Queen Mother was seen to have had a special relationship with all women. In the beginning section of Tu Kuang-ting's hagiography, he lists the most important functions of the Queen Mother:

"In heaven, beneath heaven, in the three worlds, and in the ten directions,

All women who ascend to transcendence and attain the way are her dependents." (CMYC)

The Queen Mother of the west was said to care for all women Daoists in the universe, both perfected and aspirants. Tang writers frequently refer to her in poems about Daoist women. In accordance with the Shang Ch'ing vision expressed by Tu, she appears as teacher judge, registrar, and Guardian of female believers. Her forms reflect Tu's definitions.

The queen mother was held in especially high regard by Chinese women who did not represent the societal norm of the submissive woman. To these women, The Queen Mother of the West was seen as "a powerful, independent deity representing the ultimate yin controlling immortality and the afterlife." (Cahill, 1986).

The **Xiang River goddesses** (Xiāngshuǐshén) were since ancient time's deities of the Xiang River, which flowed through the area of the ancient kingdom of Chu, into Dongting Lake. According to a somewhat later tradition, the Xiang goddesses were daughters of the Emperor Yao, who were named **Ehuang** (Fairy Radiance) and **Nüying** (Maiden Bloom) who were said to have been married by him to his chosen successor, and eventually emperor, Shun, as a sort of test of his administrative abilities: then, later, they became goddesses, after the death of their husband.

The spots that appear on the stems of certain bamboos legendarily first appeared on the bamboo growing by the Xiang River, caused by the tears which fell upon them, shed by the two Xiang River goddesses, mourning the disappearance and presumed death of their beloved husband, the Emperor and hero Shun. There are various versions of this mythological story; but, according to one version, in the last year of his reign Shun decided to tour the country of the Xiang River area. According to another version he was engaged in a military expedition versus the “Miao”. Upon his sudden death during this journey, in the “Wilderness of Cangwu”, near the headwaters of the Xiang River in the Jiuyi Mountains (sometimes translated as Doubting Mountain), both of his wives rushed from home to his body (or, in another version, to look for it, but were unable to find it), and then they wept by the river for days: their copious tears falling upon the bamboos by the river, stained them permanently with their spots.

According to Sima Qian’s *History* (Ch.6, “Annals of the First Qin Emperor”), in the 28th year of his reign (219 BCE), the Qin Emperor went on an excursion, wishing to visit the holy mountain of Heng (the southernmost of the Five Sacred Mountains of China, in present day in Hunan). However, while attempting to travel there by boat, the emperor suddenly encountered a great wind which nearly prevented his safely reaching land (much less reaching his destination). The incident took place near the shrine of Xiang Jun (on Xiangshan). Upon inquiring about identity of Xiang Jun, the emperor learned that the name referred to the daughters of Yao and the wives of Shun who were buried at this location. Before returning home (by the different Wu Pass land route), the enraged emperor ordered 3000 convict laborers to cut down all of the trees on this mountain, and then to paint the entire mountain red. Part of the reason for the Qin emperor’s fury was that the Xiang goddess (es) were patron deities of his old enemies of the Kingdom of Chu; the color red was intended to symbolize the color of the clothing mandated for convicted criminals.

Xihe (Wade–Giles: Hsi-ho), was a solar deity in Chinese mythology. One of the two wives of Di Jun (along with Changxi), she was the mother of ten suns in the form of three-legged crows residing in a mulberry tree, the Fusang, in the East Sea. Each day, one of the sun birds would be rostered to travel around the world on a carriage driven by Xihe. Folklore also held that once, all ten sun birds came out on the same day, causing the world to burn; Houyi saved the day by shooting down all but one of the sun birds.



Statue of the goddess Xihe charioteering the sun, being pulled by a dragon, in Hangzhou

Xing Tian (Xíngtiān) is a notable deity of Chinese mythology who fights against the Supreme Divinity, (sometimes known as Tian), not giving up even after the event of his decapitation. Losing the fight for supremacy, he was beheaded and his head buried in Changyang Mountain. Nevertheless, headless, with a shield in one hand and a battle axe in the other, he continues the fight, using for eyes his nipples and for a mouth his bellybutton. Xingtian fought against [Huang] Di. Di cut off his head, and the head was buried in the Changyang Mountains. But Xingtian, with his breasts as eyes, and his navel as mouth, continued to fight with his axe and shield.

According to oracle bones, during ancient times the giant Xíng Tiān was originally a follower of the Emperor Yán. After the victory of the Yellow Emperor over Yán at the Battle of Banquan, Xíng Tiān followed his master to exile in the south. At this time, the giant had no name.

After the Yellow Emperor defeated and executed Chi You, Xíng Tiān went forth with an axe and shield (some description gave a blade instead) against the Yellow Emperor. He forced his way to the southern Gate of the Celestial Court and issued a challenge to the Yellow Emperor for a duel.

The Yellow Emperor came forth and the two engaged in a ferocious combat, sword against axe, all the way down to earth to ChángYáng Mountain. In a final blow, the Yellow Emperor distracted his opponent with a trick and

lunged ... and in a flash decapitated Xíng Tiān, whose head rolled all the way to the foot of the mountain and created a thunderous roar.

Instead of dying, Xíng Tiān was able to continue moving and began groping about for his head. The Yellow Emperor raised his sword to strike the mountain. The mountain split open, the head rolled within and the mountain closed again.

Xíng Tiān gave up looking for his head, and instead used his nipples as eyes that could not see, and navel as a mouth that could not open. He began striking about wildly, giving rise to the saying (undying resolution). Thereafter, the headless giant got his name, which meant “He whose head was chopped off”.

Yama

In East Asian mythology, **Yama**, sometimes known as the **King of Hell**, is a dharmapala (wrathful god) said to judge the dead and preside over the Narakas (“Hells” or “Purgatories”) and the cycle of saṃsāra.

Although based on the god Yama of the Hindu Vedas, the Buddhist Yama has developed different myths and different functions from the Hindu deity. He has also spread far more widely and is known in every country where Buddhism is practiced, including China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

Adopted from Hinduism into Buddhism, Yama’s exact role is fairly vague in canonical texts, but is clearer in extracanonical texts and popular beliefs, although these are not always consistent with Buddhist philosophy.

In the Pali canon, the Buddha states that a person who has ill-treated their parents, ascetics, holy persons, or elders is taken upon his death to Yama. Yama then asks the ignoble person if he ever considered his own ill conduct in light of birth, deterioration, sickness, worldly retribution and death (mrityu). In response to Yama’s questions, such an ignoble person repeatedly answers, that he failed to consider the kammic consequences of his reprehensible actions and as a result is sent to a brutal hell “so long as that evil action has not exhausted its result.”¹

In the Pali commentarial tradition, the scholar Buddhaghosa’s commentary to the Majjhima Nikaya describes Yama as a vimānapeta (being in a mixed state”), sometimes enjoying celestial comforts and at other times punished for the fruits of his karma. However, Buddhaghosa considered his rule as a king to be just.

Modern Theravādin countries portray Yama sending old age, disease, punishments, and other calamities among humans as warnings to behave well. At death, they are summoned before Yama, who examines their character and dispatches them to their appropriate rebirth, whether to earth or to one of the heavens or hells. Sometimes there are thought to be two or four Yamas, each presiding over a distinct Hell.

In Chinese mythology, **King Yan** (Yánwáng) is the god of death and the ruler of Diyu, overseeing the “Ten Kings of Hell”. He is also known as **Yanluo** (Yánluówáng), a transcription of the Sanskrit for King Yama (Yama Rājā). In both ancient and modern times, Yan is portrayed as a large man with a scowling red face, bulging eyes, and a long beard. He wears traditional robes and a judge’s cap or a crown which bears the character for “king”. He typically appears on Chinese hell money in the position reserved for political figures on regular currency.

Yan is not only the ruler but also the judge of the underworld and passes judgment on all the dead. He always appears in a male form, and his minions include a judge who holds in his hands a brush and a book listing every soul and the allotted death date for every life. Ox-Head and Horse-Face, the fearsome guardians of hell, bring the newly dead, one by one, before Yan for judgement. Men or women with merit will be rewarded good future lives or even revival in their previous life. Men or women who committed misdeeds will be sentenced to torture or miserable future lives. In some versions, Yan divides Diyu into eight, ten, or eighteen courts each ruled by a Yan King, such as King Chujiang, who rules the court reserved for thieves and murderers.

The spirits of the dead, on being judged by Yan, are supposed to either pass through a term of enjoyment in a region midway between the earth and the heaven of the gods or to undergo their measure of punishment in the nether world. None of the locations are permanent and after a time, they return to Earth in new bodies.

“Yan” was sometimes considered to be a position in the celestial hierarchy, rather than an individual. There were said to be cases in which an honest mortal was rewarded the post of Yan and served as the judge and ruler of the underworld. Some said common people like Bao Zheng, Fan Zhongyan, Zhang Binglin became the Yan at night or after death.

In Tibetan Buddhism, **Shinje** (Gshin.rje) is both regarded with horror as the prime mover of the cycle of death and rebirth and revered as a guardian of spiritual practice. In the popular mandala of the Bhavachakra, all of the

realms of life are depicted between the jaws or in the arms of a monstrous Shinje. Shinje is sometimes shown with a consort, Yami, and sometimes pursued by Yamantaka (“Yama-Death”):

A holy man was told that if he meditated for the next 50 years, he would achieve enlightenment. The holy man meditated in a cave for 49 years, 11 months, and 29 days, until he was interrupted by two thieves who broke in with a stolen bull. After beheading the bull in front of the hermit, they ignored his requests to be spared for but a few minutes and beheaded him as well. In his near-enlightened fury, this holy man became Yama, the god of Death, took the bull’s head for his own, and killed the two thieves, drinking their blood from cups made of their skulls. Still enraged, Yama decided to kill everyone in Tibet. The people of Tibet, fearing for their lives, prayed to the bodhisattva Manjushri, who took up their cause. He transformed himself into Yamantaka, similar to Yama but ten times more powerful and horrific. In their battle, everywhere Yama turned, he found infinite versions of himself. Manjushri as Yamantaka defeated Yama and turned him into a protector of Buddhism. He is generally considered a wrathful deity.

Yuqiang, alternately called **Yujing**, in Chinese mythology is one of the descendents of Huang Di, the “Yellow Emperor”. Yuqiang was also the god of the north sea and a wind god. His father was Yuhao, another sea god. Some accounts (Shanhaijing chapters 8 and 17) describe Yuqiang as having the body of a bird and the face of a human being, with a serpent mount for each foot that facilitated his travels.

Zhong is a figure of Chinese mythology. Traditionally regarded as a vanquisher of ghosts and evil beings, and reputedly able to command 80,000 demons, his image is often painted on household gates as a guardian spirit, as well as in places of business where high-value goods are involved.

According to folklore, Zhong Kui travelled with Du Ping, a friend from his hometown, to take part in the imperial examinations at the capital. Though Zhong achieved top honours in the exams, his title of “zhuangyuan” was stripped by the emperor because of his disfigured appearance. In anger, Zhong Kui committed suicide upon the palace steps by hurling himself against the palace gate until his head was broken. Du Ping buried him. During his judgment, the Hell King saw potential in Zhong. Intelligent enough to score top honors in the imperial examinations, but damned to hell because he committed suicide. The Hell King (judge) then gave him the title, as king

of ghost, forever to hunt, capture, maintain and order ghosts. After Zhong became king of ghosts in Hell, he returned to his hometown on Chinese New Year's Eve. To repay Du Ping's kindness, Zhong Kui gave his younger sister in marriage to Du.

Zhurong, also known as **Chongli**, is an important personage in Chinese mythology and Chinese folk religion. According to the *Huainanzi* and the philosophical texts of Mozi and his followers, Zhurong is a god of fire and of the south. The *Shanhaijing* gives alternative genealogies for Zhurong, including descent from both the Yan Emperor and Yellow Emperor. Some sources associate Zhurong with some of the principle early and ancient myths of China, such as those of Nuwa, Gong Gong and the Great Flood. Chinese mythology has in the past been believed to be, at least in part, a factual recording of history. Thus, in the study of historical Chinese culture, many of the stories that have been told regarding characters and events which have been written or told of the distant past have a double tradition: one which tradition which presents a more historicised and one which presents a more mythological version. This is also true in the case of Zhurong. In Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shi Ji*), Zhurong is portrayed as a historical person, who held the governmental office of Minister of Fire.

Zhurong was said to be the son of Gaoyang (also known as Zhuanxu), a sky god.[5] (Again, the more historicised versions of the mythology portray Zhuanxu as a historical person; in this case an "Emperor of China"). Gaoyang also had a son, Gun, who fathered Yu the Great. The imperial clan of the Qin Dynasty also claimed descent through Gaoyang (though not Zhurong). Zhurong was also claimed to be an ancestor to the eight lineages of the royal families of the Chu state.

Caishen (God of Wealth) is the Chinese god of prosperity worshipped in the Chinese folk religion and Taoism. He has been identified with many historical figures, viewed as his embodied forms, among whom is **Zhao Gongming** (Lord Zhao, the Marshal) or **Bi Gan**. A large temple of Caishen has been built in the 2000s in Zhouzhi, Xi'an, and Shaanxi.

Caishen's name is often invoked during the Chinese New Year celebrations. He is often depicted riding a black tiger and holding a golden rod. He may also be depicted with an iron tool capable of turning stone and iron into gold. Legend has it that Bi Gan had a wife with the surname Chen. His son was Quan. After Bi Gan was put to death by his nephew King Zhou of Shang, Bi Gan's wife and son escaped into the woods. His death eventually marked the

collapse of the Shang dynasty. Later on, Quan was honoured as the ancestor of all Lins by King Wu of Zhou.

In Chinese folk religion, Chinese mythology and Taoism; The **Kitchen God** also known as the **Stove God**, named **Zao Jun**, **Zao Shen**, or **Zhang Lang**, is the most important of a plethora of Chinese domestic gods that protect the hearth and family. The Kitchen God is celebrated in Vietnamese culture as well.

It is believed that on the twenty third day of the twelfth lunar month, just before Chinese New Year he returns to Heaven to report the activities of every household over the past year to the Jade Emperor (Yu Huang). The Jade Emperor, emperor of the heavens, either rewards or punishes a family based on Zao Jun's yearly report.

Though there are many stories on how Zao Jun became the Kitchen god, the most popular dates back to around the 2nd Century BC. Zao Jun was originally a mortal man living on earth whose name was Zhang Lang. He eventually became married to a virtuous woman, but ended up falling in love with a younger woman. He left his wife to be with this younger woman and, as punishment for this adulterous act; the heavens afflicted him with ill-fortune. He became blind, and his young lover abandoned him, leaving him to resort to begging to support himself. Once, while begging for alms, he happened across the house of his former wife. Being blind, he did not recognize her. Despite his shoddy treatment of her, she took pity on him and invited him in. She cooked him a fabulous meal and tended to him lovingly; he then related his story to her. As he shared his story, Zhang Lang became overwhelmed with self-pity and the pain of his error and began to weep. Upon hearing him apologize, Zhang's former wife told him to open his eyes and his vision was restored. Recognizing the wife he had abandoned, Zhang felt such shame that he threw himself into the kitchen hearth, not realizing that it was lit. His former wife attempted to save him, but all she managed to salvage was one of his legs.

The devoted woman then created a shrine to her former husband above the fireplace, which began Zao Jun's association with the stove in Chinese homes. To this day, a fire poker is sometimes referred to as "Zhang Lang's Leg".

Alternatively, there is another tale where Zao Jun was a man so poor he was forced to sell his wife. Years later he unwittingly became a servant in the house of her new husband. Taking pity on him she baked him some cakes into which she had hidden money, but he failed to notice this and sold the cakes

for a pittance. When he realized what he had done he took his own life in despair. In both stories Heaven takes pity on Zhang Lang's tragic story. Instead of becoming a vampirish hopping corpse, the usual fate of suicides, he was made the god of the Kitchen, and was reunited with his wife.

The origin of the Kitchen god differs. Another possible story of the "Stove god" is believed to have appeared soon after the invention of the brick stove. The Kitchen god was originally believed to have resided in the stove and only later took on human form. During the Han Dynasty, it is believed that a poor farmer named Yin Zifang, was surprised by the Kitchen god who appeared on Lunar New Year as he was cooking his breakfast. Yin Zifang decided to sacrifice his only yellow sheep. In doing so, he became rich and decided that every winter he would sacrifice one yellow sheep in order to display his deep gratitude.

Traditionally, every Chinese household would have a paper effigy or a plaque of Zao Jun and his wife (who writes down everything that is said in the household over the year for her husband's report to Jade Emperor) above the fireplace in the kitchen. This tradition is still widely practiced, and Zao Jun was the most highly worshiped god of those who protect the household and family. Offerings of food and incense are made to Zao Jun on his birthday (the third day of the eighth lunar month) and also on the twenty third day (or twenty fourth day) of the twelfth lunar month, which marks his return to Heaven to give his New Year's report to the Jade Emperor. On this day, the lips of Zao Jun's paper effigy are often smeared with honey to sweeten his words to Yu Huang (Jade Emperor), or to keep his lips stuck together. After this, the effigy will be burnt and replaced by a new one on New Year's Day. Firecrackers are often lit as well, to speed him on his way to heaven. If the household has a statue or a nameplate of Zao Jun it will be taken down and cleaned on this day for the New Year.

Many customs are associated with the Kitchen god, especially defining the date of the "Kitchen god festival", also known as "Little New Year". It is noted that the date differed depending on the location. It is believed that people in northern China celebrate it on the twenty-third day of the twelfth lunar month, while the people in southern China celebrate it on the twenty-fourth. Along with location, traditionally the date may also be determined by one's Profession. For example, "feudal officials made their offerings to the Kitchen god on the twenty-third, the common people on the twenty-fourth, and coastal fishing people on the twenty-fifth". In addition, generally it was the males of the household that lead the sacrificial rites.

In order to establish a fresh beginning in the New Year, families must be organized both within their family unit, in their home, and around their yard. This custom of a thorough house cleaning and yard cleaning is another popular custom during “Little New Year”. It is believed that in order for ghosts and deities to depart to Heaven, both their homes and “persons” must be cleansed. Lastly, the old decorations are taken down, and there are new posters and decorations put up for the following Spring Festival. So, these are the famous deities worshiped in Chinese culture.

An **angel** is a supernatural being or spirit found in various religions and mythologies. In Abrahamic religions and Zoroastrianism, angels are often depicted as benevolent celestial beings who act as intermediaries between God or Heaven and Earth, or as guardian spirits or a guiding influence. Other roles of angels include protecting and guiding human beings, and carrying out God’s tasks. The term “angel” has also been expanded to various notions of spirits found in many other religious traditions. The theological study of angels is known as “angelology”. In art, angels are often depicted with bird-like wings on their back, a halo, robes and various forms of glowing light.

In Zoroastrianism there are different angel-like figures. For example, each person has one guardian angel, called Fravashi. They patronize human beings and other creatures, and also manifest God’s energy. The Amesha Spentas have often been regarded as angels, although there is no direct reference to them conveying messages, but are rather emanations of Ahura Mazda (“Wise Lord”, God); they initially appeared in an abstract fashion and then later became personalized, associated with diverse aspects of the divine creation. This is a list of angels in theology, including both specific angels (e.g. Gabriel) and types of angels (e.g. Seraphim).

The Hebrew term **Abaddon** and its Greek equivalent **Apollyon** appears in the Bible as both a place of destruction and as the name of an angel. In the Hebrew Bible, abaddon is used with reference to a bottomless pit, often appearing alongside the place meaning the realm of the dead. In the New Testament Book of Revelation, an angel called Abaddon is described as the king of an army of locusts; his name is first transcribed in Greek and then translated. The Latin Vulgate and the Douay Rheims Bible have additional notes (not present in the Greek text), “in Latin Exterminans”, exterminans being the Latin word for “destroyer”.



The Assumption of the Virgin by Francesco Botticini at the National Gallery London shows three hierarchies and nine orders of angels, each with different characteristics.

According to the Brown Driver Briggs lexicon, the Hebrew abaddon is an intensive form of the Semitic root and verb stem abad “perish” (transitive “destroy”), which occurs 184 times in the Hebrew Bible. The Septuagint, an early Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, renders “abaddon” while the Greek Apollyon comes from apollumi “to destroy”. The Greek term Apollyon (Ἀπολλύων, “the destroyer”), is the active participle of apollumi (to destroy), and is not used as a name in classical Greek texts.

The text of the Thanksgiving Hymns—which was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls—tells of “the Sheol of Abaddon” and of the “torrents of Belial [that] burst into Abaddon”. The Biblical Antiquities (misattributed to Philo) mentions Abaddon as a place (destruction) rather than an individual. Abaddon is also one of the compartments of Gehenna. By extension, it can mean an underworld abode of lost souls, or Gehenna.

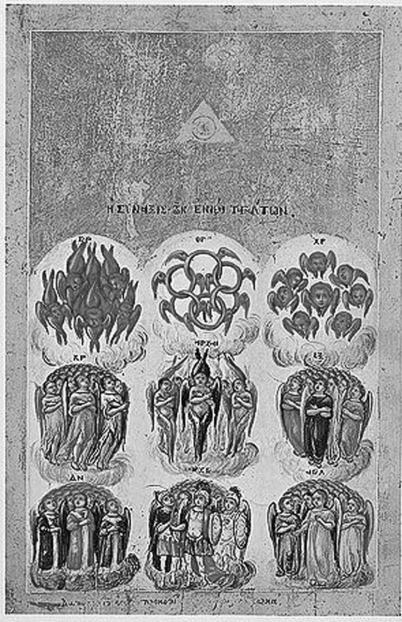
In some legends, Abaddon is identified as a realm where the damned lie in fire and snow, one of the places in Gehenna that Moses visited. The Christian scriptures contain the first known depiction of Abaddon as an individual entity instead of a place.

Revelation 9:11 and they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon. KJV, 1611

In Revelation 9:11, Abaddon is described as “Destroyer”, the angel of the abyss, and as the king of a plague of locusts resembling horses with crowned

human faces, women's hair, lions' teeth, wings, iron breast-plates, and a tail with a scorpion's stinger that torments for five months anyone who does not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

The symbolism of Revelation 9:11 leave the identity of Abaddon open to interpretation. Protestant commentator Matthew Henry (1708) believed Abaddon to be the Antichrist,[8] whereas the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary (1871) and Henry H. Halley (1922) identified the angel as Satan. Latter-Day Saints believe that the use of "Abaddon" in Revelation 9 refers to the devil. In contrast, the Methodist publication *The Interpreter's Bible* states: "Abaddon, however, is an angel not of Satan but of God, performing his work of destruction at God's bidding." Jehovah's Witnesses hold that Abaddon is another name for Jesus Christ after his resurrection.



Orthodox icon of nine orders of angels.

In the 3rd century Acts of Thomas, Abaddon is the name of a demon, or the devil himself. Abaddon is given particularly important roles in two sources, a homily entitled "The Enthronement of Abbato" by pseudo-Timothy of Alexandria, and the Apocalypse of Bartholomew. In the homily by Timothy, Abbato was first named Muriel, and had been given the task by God of collecting the earth which would be used in the creation of Adam. Upon completion of this task, the angel was appointed as a guardian. Everyone, including the angels, demons, and corporeal entities feared him. Abbato was promised that any who venerated him in life could be saved. Abaddon is also said to have a prominent role in the Last Judgement, as the one who will take the souls to the Valley of Josaphat. He is

described in the Apocalypse of Bartholomew as being present in the Tomb of Jesus at the moment of his resurrection.

Abathar Muzania is an angelic being mentioned in the literature of the Mandaeans. He is described as having the responsibility of weighing the souls of the deceased to determine their worthiness, using a set of scales to do so. He is also described as being the angel of the North Star.

Adriel (whose name means flock of God) was a nobleman in the ancient kingdom of Israel. Adriel was the son of Barzillai, the Meholathite, to whom Saul gave in marriage his daughter Merab (1 Sam. 18:19). The five sons that sprang from this union were put to death by the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21:8, 9. Here it is said that Michal “brought up” [R.V., “bare”] these five sons, either that she treated them as if she had been their own mother, or that for “Michal” we should read “Merab”, as in 1 Sam. 18:19). Thus Adriel was the son-in-law of King Saul, and the brother-in-law of King David and Queen Michal, who raised Adriel’s children as their own.

In 2 Samuel 21:8 it states that Michal daughter of Saul had 5 sons with Adriel son of Barzillai. However in some translations, instead of Michal, it says Merab. Merab was the older daughter of Saul initially promised to David, but was instead given as wife to Adriel the Meholathite. Due to that later discrepancy that states Michal as the wife of Adriel instead of Merab as first said in 1st Samuel, many scholars believe this to be an ancient copyist error that should have read Merab in 2 Samuel 21:8.

Avestan *angra mainyu* “seems to have been an original conception of Zoroaster’s.” In the Gathas, which are the oldest texts of Zoroastrianism and are attributed to the prophet himself, *angra mainyu* is not yet a proper name. In the one instance in these hymns where the two words appear together, the concept spoken of is that of a *mainyu* (“mind”, “mentality”, “spirit” etc.) that is *angra* (“destructive”, “inhibitive”, “malign” etc, of which a manifestation can be anger). In this single instance—in Yasna 45.2—the “more bounteous of the spirits twain” declares *angra mainyu* to be its “absolute antithesis”.

A similar statement occurs in Yasna 30.3, where the antithesis is however *aka mainyu*, *aka* being the Avestan language word for “evil”. Hence, *aka mainyu* is the “evil spirit” or “evil mind” or “evil thought,” as contrasted with *spenta mainyu*, the “bounteous spirit” with which Ahura Mazda conceived of creation, which then “was”.

The *aka mainyu* epithet recurs in Yasna 32.5, when the principle is identified with the *daevas* that deceive humankind and themselves. While in later Zoroastrianism, the *daevas* are demons; this is not yet evident in the Gathas: Zoroaster stated that



the daevas are “wrong gods” or “false gods” that are to be rejected, but they are not yet demons.

In Yasna 32.3, these daevas are identified as the offspring, not of Angra Mainyu, but of akem manah, “evil thinking”. A few verses earlier it is however the daebaaman, “deceiver”—not otherwise identified but “probably Angra Mainyu”—who induces the daevas to choose achistem manah—“worst thinking.” In Yasna 32.13, the abode of the wicked is not the abode of Angra Mainyu, but the abode of the same “worst thinking”. “One would have expected [Angra Mainyu] to reign in hell, since he had created ‘death and how, at the end, the worst existence shall be for the deceitful’ (Y. 30.4).”

Yasna 19.15 recalls that Ahura Mazda’s recital of the Ahuna Vairya invocation puts Angra Mainyu in a stupor. In Yasna 9.8, Angra Mainyu creates Aži Dahaka, but the serpent recoils at the sight of Mithra’s mace (Yasht 10.97, 10.134). In Yasht 13, the Fravashis defuse Angra Mainyu’s plans to dry up the earth, and in Yasht 8.44 Angra Mainyu battles but cannot defeat Tishtrya and so prevent the rains. In Vendidad 19, Angra Mainyu urges Zoroaster to turn from the good religion by promising him sovereignty of the world. On being rejected, Angra Mainyu assails the prophet with legions of demons, but Zoroaster deflects them all. In Yasht 19.96, a verse that reflects a Gathic injunction, Angra Mainyu will be vanquished and Ahura Mazda will ultimately prevail.

In Yasht 19.46ff, Angra Mainyu and Spenta Mainyu battle for possession of khvaraenah, “divine glory” or “fortune”. In some verses of the Yasna (e.g. Yasna 57.17), the two principles are said to have created the world, which contradicts the Gathic principle that declares Ahura Mazda to be the sole creator and which is reiterated in the cosmogony of Vendidad 1. In that first chapter, which is the basis for the 9th–12th-century Bundahishn, the creation of sixteen lands by Ahura Mazda is countered by the Angra Mainyu’s creation of sixteen scourges such as winter, sickness, and vice. “This shift in the position of Ahura Mazda, his total assimilation to this Bounteous Spirit [Mazda’s instrument of creation], must have taken place in the 4th century BC at the latest; for it is reflected in Aristotle’s testimony, which confronts Ariemaios with Oromazdes (apud Diogenes Laertius, 1.2.6).”

Yasht 15.43 assigns Angra Mainyu to the nether world, a world of darkness. So also Vendidad 19.47, but other passages in the same chapter (19.1 and 19.44) have him dwelling in the region of the daevas, which the Vendidad asserts is in the north. There (19.1, 19.43–44), Angra Mainyu is the daevanam daevo, “daeva of daevas” or chief of the daevas. The superlative

daevo.taema is however assigned to the demon Paitisha ("opponent"). In an enumeration of the daevas in Vendidad 1.43, Angra Mainyu appears first and Paitisha appears last. "Nowhere is Angra Mainyu said to be the creator of the daevas or their father."

Zurvanism was a branch of Zoroastrianism that sought to resolve the dilemma of the "twin spirits" of Yasna 30.3. The resolution, which probably developed out of the contact with Chaldea, was to have both Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu as twin sons of the First Principle "Time" (Avestan: Zurvan). Zurvanism was strongly criticized as a heresy during the Sassanid period (225–651) of Iranian history, an era in which it probably also had its largest following. Although the monist doctrine is not attested after the 10th century, some Zurvanite features are nonetheless still evident in present-day Zoroastrianism.

Zurvanism's principal feature is then the notion that both Ahura Mazda (MP: Ohrmuzd) and Angra Mainyu (Ahriman) were twin brothers, with the former being the epitome of good and the latter being the epitome of evil. Further, this dichotomy was by choice, that is, Angra Mainyu chose to be evil: "It is not that I cannot create anything good, but that I will not." And to prove this, he created the peacock.

The mythology of the twins is only attested in the post-Sassanid Syriac and Armenian polemic such as that of Eznik of Kolb. According to these sources the genesis saw Zurvan as an androgynous deity, existing alone but desiring offspring who would create "heaven and hell and everything in between." Zurvan then sacrificed for a thousand years. Towards the end of this period, Zurvan began to doubt the efficacy of sacrifice and in the moment of this doubt Ohrmuzd and Ahriman were conceived: Ohrmuzd for the sacrifice and Ahriman for the doubt. Upon realizing that twins were to be born, Zurvan resolved to grant the first-born sovereignty over creation. Ohrmuzd perceived Zurvan's decision, which he then communicated to his brother. Ahriman then preempted Ohrmuzd by ripping open the womb to emerge first. Reminded of the resolution to grant Ahriman sovereignty, Zurvan conceded, but limited kingship to a period of 9000 years, after which Ohrmuzd would rule for all eternity.

Ambriel is an angel who is associated with the sun sign of Gemini and the month of May. Catholicism regards an angel as a pure spirit created by God and this angel inspires clear communication and is also considered to be an angel of general protection.

Ambriel is referred to in the *Magickal Calendar. Planetanum Sigilla*, from Harl. 3420(27v). Ambriel is also attributed to the Queen of Cups in the Tarot (according to Aleister Crowley and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn). She is also the most beautiful female of all times.

Arariel (also called Azariel) is an angel who, according to the rabbis of the Talmud, takes charge of the waters of the earth. Fishermen invoke him so that they may take large fish. Arariel has also traditionally been invoked as a cure for stupidity.

Michael and **Gabriel** are recognised as archangels in Judaism, Islam, and by most Christians. The Book of Tobit—recognised in the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, but considered apocryphal by Protestants—mentions Raphael, who is also considered to be an archangel. The archangels Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael are venerated in the Roman Catholic Church with a feast on September 29 (between 1921 and 1969, March 24 for Gabriel and October 24 for Raphael), and in the Eastern Orthodox Church on November 8 (if the Julian calendar is used, this corresponds to November 21 in the Gregorian). The named archangels in Islam are Gabriel, Michael, Israfil and Azrael. Jewish literature, such as the Book of Enoch, mentions Metatron as an archangel, called the “highest of the angels”, though the acceptance of this angel is not canonical in all branches of the faith.

Some branches of the faiths mentioned have identified a group of seven Archangels, but the actual angels vary, depending on the source. Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael are always mentioned; the other archangels vary, but most commonly include Uriel, who is mentioned in 2 Esdras.

Ariel is an archangel found primarily in Jewish and Christian mysticism and Apocrypha. The name Ariel, “Lion of God” or “Hearth of God,” occurs in the Hebrew Bible but as the name of an angel the earliest source is unclear.

Azazel appears in the Bible in association with the scapegoat rite. In some traditions of Judaism and Christianity, it is the name for a fallen angel. In Rabbinic Judaism it is not a name of an entity but rather means literally “for the complete removal”, ie, designating the goat to be cast out into the wilderness as opposed to the goat sacrificed “for YHWH”.

In the Bible, the term is used three times in Leviticus 16, where two he-goats were to be sacrificed to God and one of the two was selected by lot, for God is seen as speaking through the lots. The next words are לְאַזָּזֵל la-aza’zeyl, read either as “for absolute removal” or as “for Azazel”. This goat was then cast out in the desert as part of the Day of Atonement.

In older English versions such as the King James Version the word azazeyl is translated as “as a scapegoat”, however in most modern English Bible versions the word azazeyl is represented as a name in the text:

Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the Lord and use it as a sin offering, but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

— English Standard Version Leviticus 16:8–10

Later rabbis, interpreting la-azazel as azaz (rugged) and el (strong), take it as referring to the rugged and rough mountain cliff from which the goat was cast down.

According to the Book of Enoch, which brings Azazel into connection with the Biblical story of the fall of the angels, located on Mount Hermon, a gathering-place of demons from of old (Enoch xiii.; compare Brandt, “Mandäische Theologie,” 1889, p. 38). Azazel is represented in the Book of Enoch as one of the leaders of the rebellious Watchers in the time preceding the flood; he taught men the art of warfare, of making swords, knives, shields, and coats of mail, and women the art of deception by ornamenting the body, dyeing the hair, and painting the face and the eyebrows, and also revealed to the people the secrets of witchcraft and corrupted their manners, leading them into wickedness and impurity; until at last he was, at the Lord’s command, bound hand and foot by the archangel Raphael and chained to the rough and jagged rocks of [Ha] Duduael (= Beth Ḥadudo), where he is to abide in utter darkness until the great Day of Judgment, when he will be cast into the fire to be consumed forever (Enoch viii. 1, ix. 6, x. 4–6, liv. 5, lxxxviii. 1; see Geiger, “Jüd. Zeit.” 1864, pp. 196–204).

Azazel taught men to make swords and knives and shields and breastplates; and made known to them the metals [of the earth] and the art of working them; and bracelets and ornaments; and the use of antimony and the beautifying of the eyelids; and all kinds of costly stones and all colouring tinctures. And there arose much godlessness, and they committed fornication, and they were led astray and became corrupt in all their ways.

“The corruption brought on by Azazel and the Grigori degrades the human race, and the four archangels (Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Phanuel)”... “saw much blood being shed upon the earth and all lawlessness being wrought upon the earth. The souls of men [made] their suit, saying, “Bring our cause before the Most High; Thou seest what Azazel hath done, who hath taught all unrighteousness on earth and revealed the eternal secrets which were in heaven, which men were striving to learn.”

God sees the sin brought about by Azazel and has Raphael “bind Azazel hand and foot and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening in the desert – which is in Dudael – and cast him therein. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there forever, and cover his face that he may not see light.”

Several scholars have previously discerned that some details of Azazel’s punishment are reminiscent of the scapegoat ritual. Thus, Lester Grabbe points to a number of parallels between the Azazel narrative in 1 Enoch and the wording of Leviticus 16, including “the similarity of the names Asael and Azazel; the punishment in the desert; the placing of sin on Asael/Azazel; the resultant healing of the land.” Daniel Stökl also observes that “the punishment of the demon resembles the treatment of the goat in aspects of geography, action, time and purpose.” Thus, the place of Asael’s punishment designated in 1 Enoch as Dudael is reminiscent of the rabbinic terminology used for the designation of the ravine of the scapegoat in later rabbinic interpretations of the Yom Kippur ritual. Stökl remarks that “the name of place of judgment (Dudael) is conspicuously similar in both traditions and can likely be traced to a common origin.”

Azazel’s fate is foretold near the end of 1 Enoch 2:8, where God says, “On the day of the great judgement he shall be cast into the fire. [...] The whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azazel: to him ascribe all sin.”

In the 5th Century 3 Enoch, Azazel is one of the three angels (Azza [Shemhazai] and Uzza [Ouz] are the other two) who opposed Enoch’s high rank when he became the angel Metatron. Whilst they were fallen at this time they were still in Heaven, but Metatron held a dislike for them, and had them cast out. They were thenceforth known as the ‘three who got the most blame’ for their involvement in the fall of the angels marrying women. It should be remembered that Azazel and Shemhazai were said to be the leaders of the 200 fallen, and Uzza and Shemhazai were tutelary guardian angels of Egypt with both Shemhazai and Azazel and were responsible for

teaching the secrets of heaven as well. The other angels dispersed to 'every corner of the Earth.'

Azrael is often identified with the Archangel of Death in Hebrew, Sikhism lore, as well as Islam. The Qur'an never uses this name, rather referring to *Malak al-Maut* (which translates directly as Angel of Death). Also spelled Izrail, Azrin, Izrael, Azriel, Azrail, Ezraeil, Azraile, Azryel, Ozryel, or Azraa-eel, the Chambers English dictionary uses the spelling Azrael. The name literally means One Whom God Helps, in an adaptive form of Hebrew.

Depending on the outlook and precepts of various religions in which he is a figure, Azrael may be portrayed as residing in the Third Heaven. In one of his forms, he has four faces and four thousand wings, and his whole body consists of eyes and tongues, the number of which corresponds to the number of people inhabiting the Earth. He will be the last to die, recording and erasing constantly in a large book the names of men at birth and death, respectively.

In Jewish mysticism, he is commonly referred to as "Azriel," not "Azrael." The Zohar (a holy book of the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah), presents a positive depiction of Azriel. The Zohar says that Azriel receives the prayers of faithful people when they reach heaven, and also commands legions of heavenly angels. Accordingly, Azriel is associated with the South and is considered to be a high-ranking commander of God's angels.

There is no reference to Azrael in the Catholic Bible, and he is not considered a canonical figure within Christianity. There is, however, a story in 2 Esdras (disallowed by the Catholic and Protestant Churches, but considered canonical in Eastern Orthodox teachings) which is part of the Apocrypha. 2 Esdras has the story of a scribe and judge named Ezra, also sometimes written "Azra" in different languages. Azra was visited by the Archangel Uriel and given a list of laws and punishments he was to adhere to and enforce as judge over his people. Azra was later recorded in the Apocrypha as having entered Heaven "without tasting death's taint". Depending on various religious views, it could be taken as Ezra ascending to angelic status. This would add the suffix "el" to his name, which denotes a heavenly being (e.g. Michael, Raphael and Uriel). Hence, it would be Ezrael/Azrael. Later books also state a scribe named Salathiel, who was quoted as saying, "I, Salathiel, who is also Ezra". Again, depending on certain views of Christian spirituality, this could be seen as angelic influence from Ezrael/Azrael on Salathiel, though this view of spirituality is neither confirmed nor denied by the Catholic Church.

In some cultures and sects, Azrael is the name referring to the Angel of Death by some Arabic speakers. The name is mentioned in a few Muslim

books although some Muslims argue that it has no basis of reference. [citation needed] Along with Jibrīl, Mīkhā'il, Isrāfīl and other angels, the Angel of Death is believed by Muslims to be one of the archangels. The Qur'an states that the angel of death takes the soul of every person and returns it to God. However, the Qur'an makes it clear that only God knows when and where each person will be taken by death. Several Muslim traditions recount meetings between the Angel of Death and the prophets, the most famous being a conversation between the Angel of Death and Moses. He watches over the dying, separates the soul from the body, and receives the spirits of the dead in Muslim belief. Rather than merely representing death personified, the Angel of Death is usually described in Islamic sources as subordinate to the will of God "with the most profound reverence." However, there is no reference within the Qur'an or any Islamic teachings giving the angel of death the name of Azrael. Some have also disputed the usage of the name Azrael as it is not used in the Qur'an itself. However, the same can be said about many Prophets and angels who are also not mentioned by name in the Qur'an.

In Sikh scriptures written by Guru Nanak, God (Waheguru) sends Azrael to people who are unfaithful and unrepentant for their sins. Azrael appears on Earth in human form and hits sinful people on the head with his scythe to kill them and extract their souls from their bodies. He then brings their souls to Sheol, and makes sure that they get the punishment that Waheguru decrees once he judges them. This would portray him as more of an avenging angel, or angel of retribution, rather than just an angel of death. It is unknown which story of Azrael this view is taken from.

At the time of the Sikh Gurus many Indian faiths were at loggerheads against the belief of each other. It mainly involved two major faiths of that time in the subcontinent, namely Hinduism and Islam. Sikhism played a major role in unifying all faiths by restoring the faith in one almighty god and helping in mending differences. Hence one finds the mention of an angel of death in both Hinduism and Islam, where many times the angel of death has been addressed as Jamdoot or simply as Jamm and while giving example from Islam's perspective he has been addressed as Azrael. This also goes on to show that the Sikh Gurus or the Guru Granth Sahib supported the truth of judgment of each individual soul after his/her death in the court of God.. A famous and highly regarded Sikh Saint Bhai Randhir Singh has given a profound and vivid description of afterlife in his notable work *Unditthi Duniya* meaning 'A Mystical Invisible World' using his own spiritual experiences and quoting references from Guru Granth Sahib.

Barachiel is one of the seven Archangels in Eastern Orthodox tradition. In the Third Book of Enoch he is described as one of the angelic princes, with a myriad of some 496,000 ministering angels attending him. He is described in the Almadel of Solomon as one of the chief angels of the first and fourth chora. He is regarded as the angel of lightning.

Barachiel is sometimes shown holding a white rose against the chest, or with rose petals scattered on the clothing particularly the cloak. The scattering of rose petals was to symbolize or represent God's sweet blessings showering down on people. In Roman Catholicism, Barachiel is depicted holding a bread basket or a staff, both of which symbolize the blessings of children that God bestows on parents.

Barachiel's responsibilities are as varied as the blessings for which the archangel is named, Barachiel is also the chief of the guardian angels and it is written that Barachiel may be prayed to for all the benefits which the guardian angel is thought to confer if one is not praying to the guardian angel directly, but as an intercession. He is seen as an official Saint in Eastern Orthodox tradition as well as some folk Catholic traditions, in particular a patron of family and married life. He is also seen as the angel assigned by God to watch over converts (also called "adopted children of God") to assist them in their lives. Barachiel is also traditionally associated with the month of February and the Zodiacal sign Pisces. He is also sometimes described as being the ruler of the planet Jupiter and the zodiacal sign Scorpio.



Assiel is the Latin name of an archangel in post-biblical Judeo-Christian religion, particularly that of the Kabbalah. Unlike many other angels, Cassiel is known for simply watching the events of the cosmos unfold with little interference. He is the angel of solitude and tears, and is said to preside over the deaths of kings. He is often included in lists as being one of the seven archangels and often associated with the Seventh Heaven.

In Jewish mysticism and Mesopotamian mythology, Cassiel is associated with the planet Saturn and the direction north. He is the controller of the moon, the karma and time.

In the magical text *Berit Menuchah*, Cassiel is associated with *Kefitzat Haderech*, the ability to travel quickly through space. Magic spells using his name are cast to create destruction, to scatter crowds, to cause a person to wander aimlessly, or to fall from a position of power.

Ancient Hebrew amulets bearing his name are used to drive away one's enemies. The words on the charm are written with the blood of a bird and then tied to the foot of a dove. The dove is then set to flight, taking one's enemy with it. Should the bird refuse to fly, it is a sign that one's enemies won't depart either.

Archangel Cassiel is known as the angel of temperance. In rabbinic literature, the Kabbalah is the only text to relate the identity of angels with souls. Tradition differs as to how many classes of angels exist although all relate the number of angel classes to the heavens in a one-to-one ratio. One of the older and most common views divides angels into seven classes. Another tradition states that there are only three true archangels and only three heavens. And then there is a third tradition, combining the two aforementioned for a total of ten classes of angels. Yet another theory relates the names of the archangels to the planets. Archangels are also referred to as the "chief angels" and called the "angels of the presence."

Archangels are connected to a level of sephiroth; the Kabbalah contains 10 levels of sephiroth each holding different meanings and responsibilities. Each sephirah is assigned a name and number and becomes associated with an archangel, a name of God, an angelic order, and a planetary force. These levels are sometimes referred to as Vessels of Light because they are representative of the progression of the realms in which they are connected. The sephiroth are God's means of interacting with the physical world.

A **Cherub** is a winged angelic being who is considered to attend on the Abrahamic God in biblical tradition. The concept is represented in ancient Middle Eastern art as a lion or bull with eagles' wings and a human face, and regarded in traditional Christian angelology as an angel of the second highest order of the ninefold celestial hierarchy. Cherubim are mentioned throughout the Hebrew Bible and once in the New Testament in reference to the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant (Hebrews 9:5). They also make an appearance in Islamic tradition.

Camael is an angel in Christian and Jewish mythology and angelology, and is one of the ten Kabbalah angels, assigned to the sephira *Gevurah*. He's often included in most lists as being one of the seven archangels. He is claimed to be

the leader of the forces that expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden holding a flaming sword. Camael is not recognised by the Catholic Church due to the Vatican's decision to ban the veneration of angels not mentioned in the Bible.

Daniel is a fallen angel, the seventh mentioned of the 20 Watcher leaders of the 200 fallen angels in the Book of Enoch, who taught the "signs of the sun" to humans. The name is translated by Michael Knibb as "God has judged." Conversely, according to Francis Barrett in *The Magus*, Danjal is the name of one of the 72 holy angels bearing the name of God, Shemhamphorae.

In Islamic tradition, **Darda'il** (Journeyers of God) are angels that travel in the earth searching out assemblies where people remember God's name. A hierarchy of angels is a belief or tradition found in the angelology of different religions, which holds that there are different levels or ranks of angels. Higher ranks may be asserted to have greater power or authority over lower ranks, and with different ranks having differences in appearance, such as varying numbers of wings or faces.

The Jewish angelic hierarchy is established in the Hebrew Bible, Talmud, Rabbinic literature, and traditional Jewish liturgy. They are categorized in different hierarchies proposed by various theologians. For example, Maimonides, in his *Mishneh Torah* or *Yad ha-Chazakah*: *Yesodei ha-Torah*, counts ten ranks of angels.

The most influential Christian angelic hierarchy was that put forward by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in the 4th or 5th century in his book *De Coelesti Hierarchia* (*On the Celestial Hierarchy*). During the middle Ages, many schemes were proposed, some drawing on and expanding on Pseudo-Dionysius, others suggesting completely different classifications. According to medieval Christian theologians, the angels are organized into several orders, or "Angelic Choirs".

Pseudo-Dionysius (*On the Celestial Hierarchy*) and Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica*) drew on passages from the New Testament, specifically Ephesians 1:21 and Colossians 1:16, to develop a schema of three Hierarchies, Spheres or Triads of angels, with each Hierarchy containing three Orders or Choirs.

There is no standard hierarchical organization in Islam that parallels the Christian division into different "choirs" or spheres, and the topic is not directly addressed in the Quran. However, it is clear that there is a set order or hierarchy that exists between angels, defined by the assigned jobs and

various tasks to which angels are commanded by God. Some scholars suggest that Islamic angels can be grouped into fourteen categories, with some of the higher orders being considered archangels. There is also an informal Zoroastrian angelic hierarchy, with specific angelic beings called yazatas having key positions in the day-name dedications on the Zoroastrian calendar.

Angels are occasionally presented in role-playing games as having ordered hierarchies, within which higher level angels have more power and the ability to cast more spells or exercise other magical abilities. For example, Angels in *Dungeons & Dragons*, a subgroup of the beings called Celestials, come in three different types, the progressively more powerful Astral Deva, Planetary, and Solar.

Dumah is an angel mentioned in rabbinical literature. Dumah is a popular figure in Yiddish folklore. I. B. Singer's *Short Friday* (1964), a collection of stories, mentions Dumah as a "thousand-eyed angel of death, armed with a fiery rod or flaming sword".

Dumah is the angel of silence and of the stillness of death. Dumah is also the tutelary angel of Egypt, prince of Hell, and angel of vindication. The Zohar speaks of him as having "tens of thousands of angels of destruction" under him, and as being "Chief of demons in Gehinnom [i.e., Hell] with 12,000 myriads of attendants, all charged with the punishment of the souls of sinners." In the Babylonian legend of the descent of Istar into Hades, Dumah shows up as the guardian of the 14th gate.

In the Abrahamic religions, **Gabriel** is an angel who typically serves as a messenger sent from God to certain people. In the Bible, Gabriel is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, he appeared to the prophet Daniel, delivering explanations of Daniel's visions (Daniel 8:15–26, 9:21–27). In the Gospel of Luke, Gabriel appeared to Zechariah and the Virgin Mary, foretelling the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, respectively (Luke 1:11–38). In the Book of Daniel, he is referred to as "the man Gabriel", while in the Gospel of Luke, Gabriel is referred to as "an angel of the Lord" (Luke 1:11). Gabriel is not called an archangel in the Bible, but is so called in Intertestamental period sources like the Book of Enoch. In the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches, the archangels Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel are also referred to as saints.

In Islam, Gabriel (Jibra'il) is considered one of the four archangels whom God sent with his divine message to various prophets, including Muhammad.

The 96th chapter of the Quran, sura Al-Alaq, is believed by Muslims to be the first surah revealed by Gabriel to Muhammad.

Gabriel is interpreted by the Rabbanim to be the “man in linen” in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Ezekiel. In the Book of Daniel, he is responsible for interpreting Daniel’s visions. Gabriel’s main function in Daniel is that of revealer, a role he continues in later literature. In the Book of Ezekiel, Gabriel is understood to be the angel that was sent to destroy Jerusalem. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, Gabriel takes the form of a man, and stands at the left hand of God. Shimon ben Lakish (Syria Palaestina, 3rd century) concluded that the angelic names of Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel came out of the Babylonian exile (Gen. Rab. 48:9).



Gabriel

In Kabbalah, Gabriel is identified with the sephirot of Yesod. Gabriel also has a prominent role as one of God’s archangels in the Kabbalah literature. There, Gabriel is portrayed as working in concert with Michael as part of God’s court. Gabriel is not to be prayed to because only God can answer prayers and sends Gabriel as his agent.

According to Jewish mythology, in the Garden of Eden there is a tree of life or the “tree of souls” that blossoms and produces new souls, which fall into the Guf, the Treasury of Souls. Gabriel reaches into the treasury and takes out the first soul that comes into his hand. Then Lailah, the Angel of Conception, watches over the embryo until it is born.

The intertestamental period (roughly 200 BCE – 50 CE) produced a wealth of literature, much of it having an apocalyptic orientation. The names and ranks of angels and devils were greatly expanded, and each had particular duties and status before God.

Gabriel is fifth of the five angels who keep watch: “Gabriel, one of the holy angels, who is over Paradise and the serpents and the Cherubim.” (1 Enoch 20:7)

When Enoch asked who the four figures were that he had seen: “And he said to me: ‘This first is Michael, the merciful and long-suffering: and the second, who is set over all the diseases and all the wounds of the children of men, is Raphael: and the third, who is set over all the powers, is Gabriel: and the fourth, who is set over the repentance unto hope of those who inherit eternal life, is named Phanuel.’ And these are the four angels of the Lord of Spirits and the four voices I heard in those days.” (Enoch 40:9)

Gadreel is listed as one of the chiefs in the fallen grigori of angels. This is depicted in the second section of the “Book of Enoch”; “Parables”. He is said to have been responsible for teaching man warfare. This contradicts the first section of Enoch, which claims that Azazel was responsible for doing this.

Gadreel was mentioned as the third of five “satans” who led other angels into copulating with humans, leading to the creation of the giant-like Nephilim. The others were called Yeqon (or Yaqum, Aram. “he shall rise”), Asbeel (“deserter from God”), Penemue (“the inside”), and Kasdaye (“Chaldean”, “covered hand”).

The book of Enoch also lists leaders of the 200 fallen angels who married and commenced in unnatural union with human women, and who taught forbidden knowledge. Some are also listed in Book of Raziel (Sefer Raziel HaMalakh), the Zohar, and Jubilees.

Araqiel taught humans the signs of the earth. However, in the Sibylline Oracles, Araqiel is referred to not as a fallen angel, or Watcher, but as one of the 5 angels who lead the souls of men to judgement, the other 4 being Ramiel, Uriel, Samiel, and Azazel. **Armaros** in Enoch I taught men the resolving of enchantments. **Azazel** taught men to make knives, swords, shields, and how to devise ornaments and cosmetics. **Gadreel** taught the art of cosmetics, the use of weapons and killing blows. **Baraqiel** taught men astrology **Bezaliel** mentioned in Enoch I, left out of most translations because of damaged manuscripts and problematic transmission of the text. **Chazaqiel** (sometimes Ezeqeel or Cambriel) taught men the signs of the clouds (meteorology). **Kokabiel**, in the Book of Raziel he is a high-ranking, holy angel. In Enoch I, he is a fallen Watcher, resident of the nether realms, and commands 365,000 surrogate spirits to do his bidding. Among other duties, he instructs his fellows in astrology. **Penemue** “taught mankind the art of writing with ink and paper,” and taught “the children of men the bitter and the sweet and the secrets of wisdom.” (I Enoch 69.8) **Sariel** (Suriel) taught mankind about the courses of the moon (at one time regarded as forbidden knowledge). **Samyaza** is one of

the leaders of the fall from heaven in *Vocabulaire de l' Angelologie*. **Shamsiel**, once a guardian of Eden as stated in the Zohar, served as one of the two chief aides to the archangel Uriel (the other aide being Hasdiel) when Uriel bore his standard into battle, and is the head of 365 legions of angels and also crowns prayers, accompanying them to the 5th heaven. In Jubilees, he is referred to as one of the Watchers. He is a fallen angel who teaches the signs of the sun. **Yeqon** was the ringleader who first tempted the other Watchers into having sexual relations with humans. His accomplices were Asbeel, Gadreel, Penemue, and Kasdaye (or Kasadya), who were all identified as individual "satans".

The account of the Book of Enoch has been associated with the passage in Genesis 6:1-4, which speaks of Sons of God instead of Watchers:

When men began to multiply on earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw how beautiful the daughters of man were, and so they took for their wives as many of them as they chose. Then the Lord said: "My spirit shall not remain in man forever, since he is but flesh. His days shall comprise one hundred and twenty years." At that time the Nephilim appeared on earth (as well as later), after the sons of God had intercourse with the daughters of man, who bore them sons. They were the heroes of old, the men of renown.—Genesis 6:1-4

Hadraniel, whose name means "majesty [or greatness] of God," is an angel in Jewish Angelology assigned as gatekeeper at the second gate in heaven. He is supposed to be more than sixty myriads of parasangs (approximately 2.1 million miles) tall and a daunting figure to face.

When Moses arrived in heaven to get the Torah from God, it was said that he was speechless with awe at the sight of Hadraniel. Hadraniel didn't think Moses should have the Torah, and made him weep in fear, which caused God to appear and reprimand Hadraniel for causing problems. Hadraniel quickly decided to behave and acted as a guide for Moses. This was a great help, for (according to Zoharic legend) "when Hadraniel proclaims the will of the Lord, his voice penetrates through 200,000 firmaments." Also, according to the Revelation of Moses, "with every word from his (Hadraniel's) mouth go forth 12,000 flashes of lightning."

In Gnosticism, Hadraniel is only one of seven subordinates to Jehuel, prince of fire (King, p. 15). In the Zohar (55b), Hadraniel speaks to Adam about Adam's possession of the Book of the Angel Raziel, which was said to contain secret information that not even the angels knew.

Haniel, also known as Anael, Hanael or Aniel, is an angel in Jewish lore and angelology, and is often included in lists as being one of the seven archangels. Haniel is generally associated with the planet Venus, he is also the archangel of the Sephirah Netzach.

Harut and **Marut** are the two angels mentioned in the second surah of the Qur'an who were present during the reign of the prophet Solomon and were located at a location called Babel. The Qur'an indicates that they were a trial for the people and through them the people were tested with sorcery. (Sura Al-Baqara, verse 102).

The story of Harut and Marut is told in the second surah (chapter), of the Qur'an, entitled "Al-Baqara" or "The Cow". It appears in the 102nd Ayah, or verse, and forms part of a narrative concerning the people who followed sorcery.

They followed what the Satans gave out during the reign of Solomon. Solomon disbelieved not, but the Satans disbelieved, teaching men sorcery and such things that came down upon the two Angels at Babel, Harut and Marut, but neither of these two taught anyone till they had said, "We are only for trial, so disbelieve not." And they learnt that which caused separation between a man and his wife, but they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's leave. And they learnt that which harmed them and profited them not. And indeed they knew that the buyers of it would have no share in the Hereafter. And how bad indeed was that for which they sold their own selves, if they but knew. And if they had believed and guarded themselves from evil and kept their duty to Allah, far better would have been the reward from their Lord, if they but knew! (Al-Baqarah, 102, 103)

The 14th century scholar Ibn Kathir interpreted the story of Harut and Marut and goes into depth about what exactly the angels had taught to the people of magic in his book, *Stories of the Qur'an*:

Narrated Al-'Ufi in his interpretation on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas (May Allah be pleased with him) pertaining to Allah's Statement {they followed what the Shayatin (devils) gave out (falsely of the magic) in the lifetime of Sulaiman (Solomon). Sulaiman did not disbelieve, but the Shayatin (devils) disbelieved, teaching men magic and such things that came down at Babylon to the two angels, Harut and Marut but neither of these two (angels) taught anyone (such things) till they had said, "We are only for trial, so disbelieve not (by learning this magic from us)." ...} when Sulaiman lost his kingdom, great numbers from among mankind and the jinn renegaded and followed their lusts. But, when

Allah restored to Sulaiman his kingdom and the renegade came to follow the Straight Path once again, Sulaiman seized their holy scriptures which he buried underneath his throne. Shortly after, Sulaiman (Peace be upon him) died. In no time, the men and the Jinn uncovered the buried scriptures and said: This was a book revealed by Allah to Sulaiman who hid it from us. They took it as their religion and Allah the Almighty revealed His Saying: {And when there came to them a Messenger from Allah confirming what was with them, a party of those who were given the Scripture threw away the Book of Allah behind their backs as if they did not know!}. (Al-Baqarah, 101) and they followed what the devils gave out, i.e. musical instruments, play and all that blocks the remembrance of Allah.

According to Muslim scholar Ansar Al-'Adl, many interpretations of the verse originate from alleged Judeo-Christian sources that came to be recorded in some works of Quranic exegesis, called Tafsir. Numerous tales have been transmitted about these verses, yet all center on the same basic story:

The angels [who, in Islamic theology, do not possess free will and cannot sin] had become astonished at the acts of disobedience committed by the human beings on earth. They began to curse the humans, and could not understand how they could be so sinful. Allah informed the angels that they would have also sinned if they were in the position of human beings. So the angels elected Harut and Marut from amongst themselves and God gave them human attributes and sent them to earth after commanding them to avoid wine, idolatry, fornication and murder. Harut and Marut eventually succumbed to their human lusts and fell into all of these sins. Consequently, God punished them for their transgressions.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, noted translator of the Qur'an into English, asserts that the source of this story may be the Jewish Midrash. Among the Jewish traditions in the Midrash was a story of two angels who asked Allah's permission to come down to earth but succumbed to temptation, and were hung up by their feet at Babylon for punishment. Such stories about sinning angels who were cast down to punishment were believed in by the early Christians, also (II Peter 2:4, and Epistle of Jude, verse 6).

According to Umm al-Qura University professor Abdul Aziz al-Harbi, Harut and Marut were merely human beings described with qualities often attributed to angels, rather than being actual angels, a belief which originates with `Abd Allah ibn `Abbas, one of the prophet Muhammad's companions.

In one edition of the Qur'an published by a leading member of the Ahmadiyya sect, the interpretation of this passage indicates that Harut and

Marut did not teach sorcery to anyone in Babylon. Rather, say adherents of this sect, this verse refers to the formation of certain evil secret societies there, similar to the modern Freemasons.

However, a different edition of the Qur'an published by this same sect insists that not only did Harut and Marut never teach sorcery: they were never angels at all. Rather, they were pious men who organized certain Jews into a secret organization dedicated to the downfall of their enemies. According to their interpretation, these two assisted Cyrus the Great in his conquest of Babylon, and Cyrus rewarded them by allowing the Jews to return to their homeland as related in the Old Testament books of II Chronicles (36:22-23) and Ezra. The references to teaching in this surah, say these interpreters, must be construed as forming part of the initiation ceremonies for this secretive organization, not to any kind of occultism.

Hashmallim (singular:- Hashmal) are angelic entities in both Judaism and Christianity.

They appear in the Hebrew Bible in Ezekiel 1:4:

I saw, and behold, there was a stormy wind coming from the north, a great cloud with flashing fire and a brilliance surrounding it; and from its midst, like the color of the Hashmal [often translated electrum] from the midst of the fire, and in its midst there was the likeness of four Chayot (living creatures).

Hashmallim occupy the fourth rank of ten in Maimonides's exposition of the Jewish angelic hierarchy. Hashmallim also appear in the Christian angelic hierarchy.

Zadkiel or **Hesediel** is the archangel of freedom, benevolence, mercy, and the Patron Angel of all who forgive, also known as Sachiel, Zedekiel, Zadakiel, Tzadkiel, and Zedekul. Rabbinical tradition considers him to be the angel of mercy.

In rabbinic writings Zadkiel belongs to the order of Hashmallim (equated with the Dominations or Dominions), and considered by some sources to be chief of that order (others sources name Hashmal or Zacharael). In Maseket Azilut Zadkiel/Hesediel is listed as co-chief with Gabriel of the order of Shinanim. As an angel of mercy, some texts claim that Zadkiel is the unnamed biblical Angel of the Lord who holds back Abraham to prevent the patriarch from sacrificing his son, and because of this is usually shown holding a dagger. Other texts cite Michael or Tadhriel or some other angel as the angel intended, while others interpret the Angel of the Lord as a theophany.

Zadkiel is one of two standard bearers (along with Jophiel) who follow directly behind Michael as the head archangel enters battle. Zadkiel is associated with the color violet. In Jewish mysticism and Western ritual magic, Zadkiel is associated with the planet Jupiter. The angel's position in the Sephirot is fourth, which corresponds to mercy.

Israfil (The Burning One), is the angel of the trumpet in Islam, though unnamed in the Qur'an and is the alternative name of the archangel Uriel for the Jewish people. Along with Mikhail, Jibrail and Izra'il, he is one of the four Islamic archangels. Israfil will blow the trumpet from a holy rock in Jerusalem to announce the Day of Resurrection. The trumpet is constantly poised at his lips, ready to be blown when God so orders. In Judeo-Christian biblical literature, Raphael is the counterpart of Isrāfil. Isrāfil is usually conceived as having a huge, hairy body that is covered with mouths and tongues and that reaches from the seventh heaven to the throne of God. One wing protects his body, another shields him from God, while the other two extend east and west. He is overcome by sorrow and tears three times every day and every night at the sight of Hell.[citation needed]

Although the name "Israfil" does not appear in the Quran, mention is repeatedly made of an unnamed trumpet-angel assumed to identify this figure: "And the trumpet shall be blown, so all those that are in the heavens and all those that are in the earth shall swoon, except him whom Allah will; then it shall be blown again, then they shall stand up awaiting." —Qur'an (39.68).

In Islamic tradition he is said to have been sent, along with the other three Islamic archangels, to collect dust from the four corners of the earth, although only Izra'il succeeded in this mission. It was from this dust that Adam was formed. Israfil has been associated with a number of other angelic names not pertaining to Islam, including Uriel, Sarafiel and Raphael.

Certain sources indicate that, created at the beginning of time, Israfil possesses four wings, and is so tall as to be able to reach from the earth to the pillars of Heaven. A beautiful angel who is a master of music, Israfil sings praises to God in a thousand different languages, the breath of which is used to inject life into hosts of angels who add to the songs themselves.

According to Sunni traditions reported by Imam Al-Suyuti, the Ghawth or Qutb, who is regarded among Sufis as the highest person in the rank of siddiqun (saints), is someone who has a heart that resembles that of Archangel Israfil, signifying the loftiness of this angel. The next in rank are the

saints who are known as the Umdah or Awtad, amongst whom the highest ones have their hearts resembling that of Angel Michael, and the rest of the lower ranking saints having the heart of Jibreel or Gabriel, and that of the previous prophets before Muhammad. The earth is believed to always have one of the Qutb.

Saint Jegudiel the Archangel also Jhudiel or Jehudiel is one of the seven Archangels in Eastern Orthodox tradition and in the eastern rites of the Catholic Church. He is often depicted in iconography holding a crown and a three-thonged whip. in hand, which symbolizes reward from God for the righteous and punishment for the sinners. The classic Eastern Orthodox depiction usually shows him standing upright, holding a crown in his right hand, and a rod or staff in his left hand.

Jegudiel is the patron of all who work in some field of endeavor, and the crown he holds symbolizes the reward for successful spiritual labors. Along with his subordinate angels he is the advisor and defender of all who work in positions of responsibility to the glory of God, and as such is resorted to by kings, judges, and others in positions of leadership. Jegudiel is also known as the bearer of God's merciful love and also angel over Friday. Considered as one of the seven archangels in a variant Catholic system, which pairs each archangel with a specific day of the week and attribute. With regard to the history of the archangel's name, it is thought to have first been mentioned in the Book of Enoch between 130 BC and 68 AD. Shortly thereafter and depending on the nationality of first Christians, he was called Jegudiel or Jehudiel.

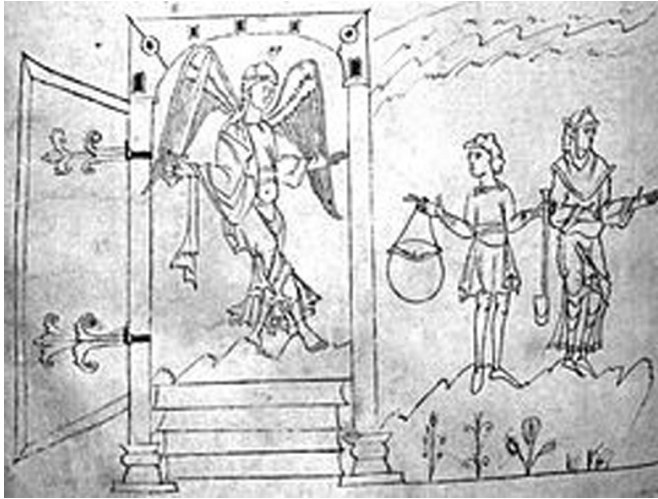
Yahoel is the name of an angel appearing in the Old Church Slavonic manuscripts of the Apocalypse of Abraham, a pseudepigraphical work dating from after the Siege of Jerusalem (70). He is an associate of the archangel Michael (Apoc.Abr.10:17) charged to restrain Leviathan and destroy idolaters (10:10-14).

Another later pseudepigraphical rabbinical work ascribed to Ishmael ben Elisha, Hebrew 3 Enoch 48d, gives Yahoel as one of the 70 names of Metatron, which makes sense in light of the character and role of Yahoel in Apocalypse of Abraham. In the 13th Century kabbalistic Berith Menucha of Abraham Merimon of Granada Yahoel is the angel over fire.

Several popular dictionaries of angels, such as Gustav Davidson A dictionary of angels: including the fallen angels (1967) repeat the claim that Jehoel was (in unidentified Jewish texts) the chief angel of the Seraphim. No source for this claim is forthcoming.

In the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, an apocryphal book which has come down to us in Coptic, the angel referred to as Eremiel tells Zephaniah : “I am the great angel, Eremiel, who is over the abyss and Hades, the one in which all of the souls are imprisoned from the end of the Flood, which came upon the earth, until this day”

The angel **Jophiel** is also known as Yofiel (Divine Beauty), Youfiel and Zophiel (My Rock is God).



Jophiel was said to be the Angel who cast Adam and Eve out of Paradise.

Another name for Jophiel is Dina. Jophiel/Dina is described as an angel of the seventh heaven, a Cabalistic guardian of the Torah (and wisdom itself), who taught 70 languages to souls at the dawn of creation. The Zohar lists him as a Great Angel Chief in charge of 53 legions who superintend Torah-readings on the Sabbath. Jophiel is said to be a companion to the angel Metatron.

Jophiel is an Archangel of the Kabbalah (though some systems put Raziel in his place) and in several listings including that of the early medieval theologian pseudo-Dionysus. The *Calendarium Naturale Magicum Perpetuum* lists Jophiel as the angel of the Sephira Chokhmah, as do the Key of Solomon variant “The Veritable Clavicles of Solomon,” and the Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses, both latter works derived from the *Calendarium*. Agrippa attributes Jophiel to Saturn, while Paracelsus assigns him to Jupiter. Rudd attributes the Zodiac to Jophiel along with the Sephira Binah. Athanasius Kircher names Jophiel as “Angelus pulchritudinis,” angel of beauty. According to Robert Ambelain, Jophiel is in charge of the Cherubim, particularly the

Shemhamphorasch angels Haziël, Aladiah, Lauviah, Hahaiah, Iezalel, Mehahel, Hariel, and Hakamiah.

Kerubiel is the name of an angel in the apocryphal Book of Enoch. He is the principal regent who has reign over the Cherubim since Creation, and one of the most exalted princes of Heaven. Kerubiel is about seven Heavens tall with a body made of burning coals that is covered with thousands of eyes. His face is made of fire, his eyes sparks of light, and his lashes are lightning bolts. Fire spews forth with every word that he speaks and he is covered with wings from head to toe. Thunder, lightning, and earthquakes are his constant companions and the splendor of the Shekinah shines upon him. In Enoch's words, Kerubiel is "full of burning coals...there is a crown of holiness on his head... and the bow of the Shekinah is between his shoulders."

In Islamic tradition the two kiraman katibin, are two angels called **Raqib** and **Atid**, believed by Muslims to record a person's actions, thoughts and feelings. Whether a person is sent to Jannah (paradise) or Jahannam (hell/purgatory) is not, however, dependent on whether good deeds outweigh bad deeds; but is ultimately up to Allah's mercy upon a believer. The Quran refers to them in two places, in 50:16-18 and by name as 'Noble Recorders' in 82:10-12.

The work of the Kiraman Katibin is to write down and record every action, thought, or feeling a person has each day. One angel figuratively sits on the right shoulder and records all good deeds, while another sits on the left shoulder and records all bad deeds.

The Book in which the angels are writing is the cumulative record of a given person's deeds. After that person's death, it is said that on the Day of Judgement each person will be confronted with this record, and the two angels will be present to tell God of what the person did.

It is recorded that Muhammad once said, "The (scribe) on the left hand raises his pen (i.e., delays writing) for six hours (this may refer to six hours of 60 minutes as measured by astronomers, or it may refer to short periods of time during the day or night, according to Lisan al-'Arab) before he records the sinful deed of a Muslim. If [the Muslim] regrets it and seeks God's forgiveness, the deed is not recorded, otherwise it is recorded as one deed." A further respite is granted after the deed has been recorded; up until the moment before death approaches, one is able to repent and ask for forgiveness.

Muhammad also stated: "After the death of the Muslim, they soar to the heaven and seek permission to live there, but Almighty God turns down their

request saying, 'My Heavens are full of Angels who are constantly engaged in Glorifying Me'. Then they will Reply, 'Your creation has filled the earth, constantly glorifying You.' Thereafter, Almighty God will command them to stand at the graveside of the Muslims and the servants of Almighty God to recite "Glory be to God" and prayers, and the reward of which is then bestowed upon the deceased person".

In Judeo-Christian folklore the angel **Kushiel**, meaning "Rigid One of God", punishes individuals in Hell. Kushiel is one of seven angels of punishment along with Hutriel, Lahatiel, Makatiel, Puriel (also written Pusiel), Rogziel and Shoftiel. As a "presiding angel of Hell," he is said to punish nations with a whip made of fire, although, along with the other angels of punishment, is reported in Second Book of Enoch 10:3 to dwell in the third heaven.

The angel **Lailah** or **Laylah** is an angel of the night in some interpretations in the Talmud and in some later Jewish mythology. The ending lah is a feminine. Lailah is the only angel with a feminine name and distinctly feminine characteristics.

An angel Layla is not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. There is no direct indication of angelic involvement in Abraham's coalition with the Semite kings Chedorlaomer, Tidal, Amraphel and Arioch and their night attack on the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. "Rabbi Yochanan"'s interpretation of "at night" in Genesis 14:14 is usually seen in the context of the Second Temple period with an increased interest in angels and the Jewish angelic hierarchy.

Lailah chooses a soul from the Garden of Eden and commands it to enter the embryo. Lailah watches over the development in the womb and shows the rewards and punishments available to the individual. Then right before birth, Lailah strikes the newborn above the lip, making it forget what was learned and creating the philtrum. Lailah serves as a guardian angel throughout a person's life and at death, leads the soul into the afterlife.

Ellen Frankel notes that God decides the fate of the child when it is conceived and leaves one thing undecided, whether it will be righteous or wicked allowing it to have free will. According to Howard Schwartz, knowledge is present and then forgotten at birth, much like the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious, and Lailah is the polar opposite of Lilith, who wastes seed, is not maternal, and is bent on destruction, not creation. The story of Lailah is mentioned by Louis Ginzberg in *Legends of the Jews*. from the Midrash Tanhuma, Pekudei 3, in relation to Hanina ben Pappa's interpretation in Niddah 16b. Following Hanina ben Pappa, also according to the Zohar Chadash 68:3 the angel is in charge of conception and pregnancy.



Lucifer

Lucifer occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible and according to the KJV based Strong's Concordance means "shining one, morning star". According to Islamic legendary tradition, Muhammad was taken to see Heaven and Hell, and there, he saw Maalik, and was shown a glimpse of the suffering of the people of Hell. The Qur'an itself does neither explain nor specifically describe the origin, purpose or character of Maalik. In art, Malik is often depicted with a stern expression on his face, since the Hadith (a collection of Muslim commentaries on the teachings of Muhammad) says that Malik never laughs. Malik may

also be shown surrounded by fire, which represents hell.

Metatron is an archangel in Judaism, known as the Recording Angel or the Chancellor of Heaven (which makes Adramelech his infernal counterpart).

Although he is mentioned in a few brief passages in the Talmud, Metatron appears primarily in mystical ("Kabbalistic") texts within the rabbinical Jewish tradition. In that tradition, he is the highest of the angels and serves as the celestial scribe or "recording angel".

Michael is mentioned three times in the Book of Daniel, once as a "great prince who stands up for the children of your people". The idea that Michael was the advocate of the Jews became so prevalent that in spite of the rabbinical prohibition against appealing to angels as intermediaries between God and his people, Michael came to occupy a certain place in the Jewish liturgy. In the New Testament Michael leads God's armies against Satan's forces in the Book of Revelation, where during the war in heaven he defeats Satan. In the Epistle of Jude Michael is specifically referred to as



Michael

“the archangel Michael”. Christian sanctuaries to Michael appeared in the 4th century, when he was first seen as a healing angel, and then over time as a protector and the leader of the army of God against the forces of evil. By the 6th century, devotions to Archangel Michael were widespread both in the Eastern and Western Churches. Over time, teachings on Michael began to vary among Christian denominations.

The Angel **Moroni** is, in Mormonism, an angel that visited Joseph Smith on numerous occasions, beginning on September 21, 1823. According to Smith, the angel was the guardian of the golden plates, which Latter Day Saints believe were the source material for the Book of Mormon, buried in a hill near Smith’s home in western New York. Moroni is an important figure in the theology of the Latter Day Saint movement, and is featured prominently in Mormon architecture and art. Three Witnesses besides Smith also reported that they saw Moroni in visions in 1829, as did several other witnesses who each said they had their own vision

Moroni is thought by Latter Day Saints to be the same person as a Book of Mormon prophet-warrior named Moroni, who was the last to write in the golden plates. The book states that Moroni buried them before he died after a great battle between two pre-Columbian civilizations. After he died, he became an angel, and was tasked with guarding the golden plates, and with eventually directing Smith to their location in the 1820s. According to Smith, he returned the golden plates to Moroni after they were translated and as of 1838 the angel Moroni still had the plates in his possession.



Statue of Moroni

Munkar and **Nakir** (The Denied and The Denier) in Islamic eschatology, are angels who test the faith of the dead in their graves. Muslims believe that, after death, a person’s soul passes through a stage called barzakh, where it exists in the grave (even if the person’s body was destroyed, the soul will still rest in the earth near their place of death). The questioning will begin when the funeral is over and the last person of the funeral congregation has stepped 40 steps away from the grave. Nakir and Munkar prop the deceased soul upright in the grave and ask three questions: “Who is your Lord? Who is your Prophet? What is your religion?” A righteous believer will respond correctly, saying that their

Lord is Allah, that Muhammad is their prophet and that their religion is Islam. If the deceased answers correctly, the time spent awaiting the resurrection is pleasant. Those who do not answer as described above are chastised until the Day of Judgment.

These angels are described as having solid black eyes, having a shoulder span measured in miles, and carrying hammers “so large, that if all of mankind tried at once to move them a single inch, they would fail”. When they speak, tongues of fire come from their mouths. If one answers their questions incorrectly, one is beaten every day, other than Friday, until Allah gives permission for the beating to stop.

Muslims believe that a person will correctly answer the questions not by remembering the answers before death (compare with the Egyptian Book of the Dead) but by their iman and deeds such as salat and shahadah (the Islamic profession of faith). Munkar is sometimes transliterated as Monkir.

Muriel, whose name is derived from the Greek myrrh, is Domination in Western Christian Angelology. Muriel is the Angel of the Month of June, is associated with the astrological sign of Cancer, and is invoked from the South.

Nuriel, an angel in Jewish mythology, translates as “Fire of the Lord” and is the angel responsible for hailstorms. In Jewish legend, Moses encountered Nuriel in the 2nd heaven, when he issues from the side of Chesed (Mercy), Nuriel manifests in the form of an eagle. An eagle issuing from the side of Geburah (Strength), is Uriel.

In the Syriac Book of Protection, Nuriel is characterized as a “spellbinding power” and is grouped with Michael, Shamshiel, Seraphiel, and other great angels. The height of Nuriel is exceeded only by the Erelim, by the watchers, by Af and Hemah, and of course by Metatron, who is the tallest hierarch in heaven. In gnostic lore, Nuriel is one of seven subordinates to Jehuel, prince of fire. Nuriel is also effective as a charm for warding off evil. His name is found engraved on oriental and Hebrew amulets, notably those worn by pregnant women.

Pahaliah is a guardian angel invoked to convert non-Christians to Christianity. He is a member of the Order of Thrones and an angel of Virtuosity. He rules theology and morals, granting wisdom, determination and knowledge, and is one of the angels bearing the mystical name of God, Shemhamphorae. His corresponding angel is Sothis, who is an angel of an hour.

Penemue is a watcher in Book of Enoch lore. He is a curer of stupidity in man, mentioned in Bereshith Rabba. As an angel associated with Abraxiel (Abraxas), Penemue (whose name means, the inside) was also likely of the order of healing angels called the Labbim.

Phanuel is the name given to the fourth angel who stands before God in the Book of Enoch, after Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel. He is also considered to be the ruler of the Ophanim. His name means “the face of God”. His was one of the four voices Enoch heard praising God.

This first is Michael, the merciful and long-suffering: and the second, who is set over all the diseases and all the wounds of the children of men, is Raphael: and the third, who is set over all the powers, is Gabriel: and the fourth, who is set over the repentance unto hope of those who inherit eternal life, is named Phanuel. (1 Enoch 40:9)

As an angel, Phanuel is reputedly a member of the four Angels of Presence. In 1st Enoch, he is also listed as an angel of exorcism (he is heard “expelling Satans”). Phanuel has also been linked with the Angel of Penance mentioned in the Shepherd of Hermas.

Some associate Phanuel with Uriel, however, the Book of Enoch clearly distinguishes the two. Uriel means ‘the Light of God’ while Phanuel has a different meaning. Phanuel’s duties include bearing up God’s throne, acting as a guardian angel to all who have inherited salvation in Jesus Christ, minister of Truth and is an angel of judgement. Furthermore, as The Book of Enoch attests, Phanuel is the angel of repentance unto hope of those who have inherited eternal life. Piecing together the writings of Enoch and the Revelation of John, Phanuel, along with Michael, Gabriel and Raphael will all drink from the ‘winepress of the Wrath of God’, strengthening them in that day, the Day of the Lord. Phanuel’s arch-rival in the demonic hordes is Belial the Devil and father of lies. During the Battle of Armageddon, Phanuel will relinquish this rivalry, to fulfill the prophecy that Christ will destroy Belial with the word of His mouth. It is often thought that Phanuel is among the angelic voices in Revelation 11:15 saying “The world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. He shall reign forever and ever. Amen”

According to The Book of Enoch, Phanuel is the fourth angel “set over repentance and those who hope to inherit eternal life” [Enoch, Chapter 40:9]. He is the fourth voice heard [Enoch, Chapter 40:7] “fending off the Satans (advisories or accusers) and forbidding them to come before the Lord of spirits to accuse them who dwell on the earth”.

Puriel is an angel who appears in the apocryphal work of the Testament of Abraham, the 2nd century apocalyptic tale of Abraham's journey to heaven. Puriel is described as "fiery and pitiless," and is one of the two angels (along with Dokieli) charged with the task of examining the soul of each person brought to heaven after death.



Raguel is referred to as the archangel of justice, fairness, harmony, and vengeance. In the Book of Enoch Raguel is one of the seven angels who watch, and his function is to take vengeance on the world of the luminaries who have transgressed God's laws. Raguel is also mentioned in the first writings ever found of Enoch who was the first man who ever started writing and the sentence is "Word of blessing of Henok, wherewith he blessed the chosen and righteous who would be alive in the day of tribulation for the removal of all wrongdoers and backsliders." Raguel brings a course of fire which persecutes all the fallen luminaries. Raguel also shows Enoch The Seven Mountains and in the midst of it-

the high mountain which is the throne of God where the Lord of Glory will sit along with the tree of wisdom. Raguel brings all the other angels to account for their improper deeds. Before the Son of Man arrives he will inhabit a man to take vengeance on the luminaries. (Zohar).

Raguel is not mentioned in the canonical writings of the Bible. In 2 Enoch, when the patriarch Enoch visited heaven as a mortal, it was Raguel who carried him to and from the mortal world, along with the angel Sariel or Samuil.

Possible historical references to a similar figure from other cultures can be found in Babylonian culture as "Rag" (some translations say Ragumu), and in Sumerian as "Rig" which means to talk or speech. Thus, these similar characters represented balance in those cultures as well.

Raphael is an archangel of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, who in the Christian tradition performs all manners of healing. In Islam, Raphael is the fourth major angel; in Muslim tradition, he is known as Israfil. Raphael is mentioned in the Book of Tobit, which is accepted as canonical by Catholics, Orthodox, and some Anglo-Catholics and as useful for public teaching by

Lutherans and Anglicans. Raphael is generally associated with the angel mentioned in the Gospel of John as stirring the water at the healing pool of Bethesda. Raphael is also an angel in Mormonism, as he is briefly mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Raziel is an archangel within the teachings of Jewish mysticism (of the Kabbalah of Judaism) who is the “Keeper of Secrets” and the “Angel of Mysteries”. He is associated with the Sephira Chokmah (the second of ten) in Olam Briah, one of the Four Worlds of Kabbalistic theories. Various teachings assign Raziel to diverse roles, including that of a Cherub, a member of the Ophanim, and chief of the Erelim. Raziel, under the alternate name Galizur, (“Revealer of The Rock”) is described as the “-ruling prince of the 2nd Heaven.-” He is said to expound the “Torah’s divine wisdom,” and protects the ministering angels from the Hayyoth, the “holy Creatures” that uphold the universe.

Râmîêl is a fallen Watcher in the apocryphal Book of Enoch, one of 20 leaders, mentioned sixth. Ramiel means “thunder of God” from the Hebrew elements ra’am and El, “God”. There are 20 leaders in the Book of Enoch, also called 1 Enoch. The section that mentions them reads: 7. And these are the names of their leaders: Sêmîazâz, their leader, Arâkîba, Râmêêl, Kôkabîêl, Tâmîêl, Râmîêl, Dânêl, Êzêqêêl, Barâqîjâl, Asâêl, Armârôs, Batârêl, Anânêl, Zaqîêl, Samsâpêêl, Satarêl, Tûrêl, Jômjâêl, Sariêl. 8. These are their chiefs of tens.” - R. H. Charles translation, The Book of the Watchers, Chapter VI.

As described in 1 Enoch, these are the leaders of 200 angels that are turned into fallen Angels due to their taking wives, mating with human women, and teaching forbidden knowledge. In this same work, Remiel is also the name of an angel, and is described as “one of the holy angels whom God has set over those who rise” from the dead, in effect the angel that watches over those that are to resurrect. He is mentioned also in 2 Baruch where he presides over true visions (55:3).

Ramiel is the angel of hope, and he is credited with two tasks: he is responsible for divine visions, and he guides the souls of the faithful into Heaven. He is called Jeremiel or Uriel in various translations of IV Esdras, He is said to have been the archangel responsible for the destruction of the armies of Sennacherib, as well as being the bearer of the instructions of the seven archangels.

Sachiel is an archangel of the order of Cherubim in Kabbalistic and Christian angelology. The meaning of his name is given as “the covering of

God—and he is associated with the Zodiacal sign Sagittarius, the weekday Thursday, wealth and charity. While in most sources Sachiël presides over Thursday, others do assign him to Monday or Friday. All associate him with the planet Jupiter; as such, in new age angel lore he can be invoked for matters involving money, finance, law, politics, and religion. His sigil appears in Francis Barrett's *The Magus*, an early nineteenth century compendium of occult lore. It also appears in the 16th century treatise, *The Complete Book of Magic Science*.



Sachiël

Samael or “Poison of God,” is an important archangel in Talmudic and post-Talmudic lore, a figure who is accuser (devil), seducer and destroyer, and has been regarded as both good and evil. Rabbinical writings describe Samael as the guardian angel of Esau and a patron of Edom (or, the Roman empire). He is considered in Talmudic texts to be a member of the heavenly host (with often grim and destructive duties). One of Samael's greatest roles in Jewish lore is that of the main archangel of death. He remains one of Yahweh's servants even though he wants men to do evil. As an angel, Samael

resides in the seventh heaven, although he is declared to be the chief angel of the fifth heaven, the reason for this being the presence of the throne of glory in the fifth heaven.

In Judaism, Samael is said to be the angel of death, one of the seven archangels, the ruler over the Fifth Heaven, and commander of two million angels. *Yalkut Shimoni* (I, 110) presents Samael as Esau's guardian angel.

Sandalphon is an archangel in Jewish and Christian writings. Sandalphon figures prominently in the mystical literary traditions of Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity, notably in the Midrash, Talmud, and Kabbalah. Though not explicitly referenced in scripture, some of the earliest sources on Sandalphon refer to him as the prophet Elijah transfigured and elevated to angelic status. Other sources (mainly from the midrashic period) describe him as the “twin brother” of Metatron, whose human origin as Enoch was similar to the human origin of Sandalphon.

Physical descriptions of Sandalphon vary depending on the source. He is uniformly depicted as extremely tall—he exceeds Hadramiel (another angel)

in height by a 500-year foot journey. During Moses' visits to the Third Heaven, he is said to have glimpsed Sandalphon and called him the "tall angel" (though this legend dates to much later than the time of the Torah). The Babylonian Talmud Hagigah 13b says Sandalphon's head reaches Heaven, which is also said of Israfil and of the Greek monster Typhon, with whom Sandalphon seems to have similar mythological roots. He is also described as being a member of the Sarim (angelic princes), and a Hazzan (master of heavenly song).

In The Greater Key of Solomon, Sandalphon is designated "the left-hand feminine cherub of the Ark". In the liturgy for the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, he is credited with gathering the prayers of the faithful, making a garland of such prayers, and then "adjuring them to ascend as an orb to the supreme King of Kings". In Enoch chapter 3, he is the ruler of the Sixth Heaven (makom) but in the Zohar he is "chief of the Seventh Heaven". According to Islamic lore, he dwells in the Fourth Heaven. As Michael does, he carries on a ceaseless battle with Samael (perhaps Satan), angel of evil. The ancient sages also referred to him by the name Ophan (Hebrew for "wheel"), a reference to the "wheel within the wheel" from Ezekiel's vision of the merkabah (heavenly chariot) in Ezekiel chapter 1. Sandalphon is also said to be instrumental in bringing about the differentiation of sex in the embryo.

In Kabbalah, Sandalphon is the angel who represents the sephirah of Malkhut and overlaps (or is confused with) the angel Metatron. He is said to appear before the feminine presence of the Shekhinah and supposedly receives the prayers of humans and sends them to God.

Sariel is an angel, mainly from Judaic tradition. Sariel is sometimes identified with Metatron. In 1 Enoch, he is both a fallen Watcher, and (as Saraqael) one of the seven holy angels who is "of eternity and trembling". In Kabbalistic lore, he is one of seven angels of the earth. Origen identified Sariel as one of seven angels who are primordial powers. In Gnosticism, Sariel is invoked for his protective powers. He is commemorated in the calendar of the Coptic Orthodox Church on 27 Tubah.

Seraphiel is the name of an angel in the apocryphal Book of Enoch. Protector of Metatron, Seraphiel holds the highest rank of the Seraphim with the following directly below him, Jehoel. In some texts, he is referred to as the Angel of Silence. Eponymously named as chief of the Seraphim, one of several for whom this office is claimed, Seraphiel is one of eight judge angels and a prince of the Merkabah. In 3 Enoch, Seraphiel is described as an enormous, brilliant angel as tall as the seven heavens with a face like the face of angels and a body like the body of eagles. He is beautiful like lightning and the light

of the morning star. As chief of the seraphim, he is committed to their care and teaches them songs to sing for the glorification of God. In magical lore, Seraphiel is one of the rulers of Tuesday and also the planet Mercury. He is invoked from the North.



Seraphil

The earliest reference to a system of seven archangels as a group appears to be in Enoch I (the Book of Enoch) which is not part of the Jewish Canon but is prevalent in the Judaic tradition, where they are named as Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Remiel and Saraqael. While this book today is non-canonical in most Christian Churches, it was explicitly quoted in the New Testament (Letter of Jude 1:14-15) and by many of the early Church Fathers. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church to this day regards it to be canonical.

In the late 5th to early 6th century, Pseudo-Dionysius gives them as Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Chamuel, Jophiel, and Zadkiel. The earliest Christian mention is by Pope Saint Gregory I who lists them as Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel (or Anael), Simiel, Oraphiel and Raguel. A later reference to seven archangels would appear in an 8th or 9th century talisman attributed to Auriolus, a “servant of God” in north-western Spain. He issues a prayer to “all you patriarchs Michael, Gabriel, Cecitiel, Oriel, Raphael, Ananiel, Marmoniel (“who hold the clouds in your hands”).

Shamsiel was the 16th Watcher of the 20 leaders of the 200 fallen angels that are mentioned in an ancient work called the Book of Enoch. The name means “sun of God”, which is fitting since it has been said that Shamsiel taught men the songs of the sun during the days of Jared or Yered. Shamash (the Babylonian sun god) may share some mythological basis with Shamsiel.

Shamsiel is said to lead 365 legions of lesser angels in the Zohar and it is said that he was assigned by God to guard the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve were expelled; this would make him a cherub if this legend is true. There is apparently some disagreement in sources as to whether or not Shamsiel is a fallen angel; he is still regarded as the ruler of the 4th Heaven and it has been

said that he fought on the side of God during the War in Heaven according to some questionable sources

Tennin, are spiritual beings found in Japanese Buddhism that are similar to western angels, nymphs or fairies. They were imported from Chinese Buddhism, which was influenced itself by the concepts of heavenly beings found in Indian Buddhism and Chinese Taoism.

Tennin are mentioned in Buddhist sutras[citation needed], and these descriptions form the basis for depictions of the beings in Japanese art, sculpture, and theater. They are usually pictured as unnaturally beautiful women dressed in ornate, colorful kimonos (traditionally in five colors), exquisite jewelry, and flowing scarves that wrap loosely around their bodies. They usually carry lotus blossoms as a symbol of enlightenment or play musical instruments such as the biwa, or flute. Tennin are believed to live in the Buddhist heaven as the companions to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Some legends also make certain tennin solitary creatures living on mountain peaks. Pilgrims sometimes climb these mountains in order to meet the holy spirits.



A depiction of Tennin.

Tennin can fly, a fact generally indicated in art by their colored or feathered kimonos, called hagaromo ("dress of feathers"). In some legends, tennin are unable to fly without these kimonos (and thus cannot return to heaven). More rarely, they are shown with feathered wings. In a Noh play Hagaromo, which bears a number of similarities to the Western swan maiden legends, tennyō come to the earth and take off their hagaromo. A fisherman spies them and hides their clothes in order to force one to marry him. After some years he tells his wife what he did, and she finds her clothes and returns to heaven. The legend says it occurred on the beach of Miho no Matsubara, now a part of the city of Shizuoka.

Zaphkiel is an archangel. His name means “God’s knowledge”. He is sometimes equated with Jophiel/Zophiel, but other times considered to be a different angel. Zaphkiel is “chief of the order of thrones and one of the 9 angels that rule Heaven; also one of the 7 archangels.” He can watch people when they need to make important decisions and when they need to put them into words for others. If they are unsure of the words, he will help them to make the message clearer. He is associated with the planet Saturn.

Temeluchus is the leader of the tartaruchi, the chief angel of torment, according to the extracanonical Apocalypse of Paul. In addition to being described as “a merciless angel, all fire,” Temeluchus (also called Tartaruchus) has the surprising designation as a caretaking angel set over children at birth or during infancy.

According to the Torah, was the father of Mishael, Elzaphan, and Zithri, and was a son of Kohath and grandson of Levi, consequently being the brother of Amram and uncle of Aaron, Miriam, and Moses. Uzziel is portrayed in the text as the founder of the Uzzielite faction of Levites; however, despite Uzziel supposedly being Kohath’s son, and Elzaphan’s father, on some occasions the Book of Chronicles treats the Uzzielites as being quite distinct from the descendants of Kohath, and from those of Elzaphan.

No further details of Uzziel’s life are given by the Bible, and according to bible critics, the genealogy for Levi’s descendants is actually an aetiological myth, reflecting popular perception of the connections between different Levite factions; textual “scholars” attribute the genealogy to the Book of Generations, a document originating from a similar religiopolitical group and date to the priestly source.

Wormwood is a star or angel that appears in the Book of Revelation. Apsinthos in the Greek text, translated as “wormwood” in English language versions of the Bible, is thought to be *Artemisia herba-alba*. Various religious groups and figures, including Seventh-day Adventists and the theologians Matthew Henry and John Gill, regard the verses of Revelation 8 as symbolic references to past events in human history. In the case of Wormwood, some historicist interpreters believe that this figure represents the army of the Huns as led by king Attila, pointing to chronological consistencies between the timeline of prophecy they have accepted and the history of the Huns’ campaign in Europe. Others point to Arius, the emperor Constantine, Origen or the ascetic monk Pelagius, who denied the doctrine of Original sin.

Archangel **Zerachiel** is one of the primary angels who lead souls to judgement. An Angel of Healing, he is also the presiding angel of the sun,

prince of ministering angels those who watch over mortals, and the angel of children, particularly children of parents who have sinned (and are therefore at risk of falling into sin as adults themselves). He is said to have dominion over the earth. In Enoch I (the Book of Enoch) he is listed as one of the seven archangels. In the list of Pope Gregory I, one of the seven archangels is called Zachariel.

Zadkiel or **Hesediel** is the archangel of freedom, benevolence, mercy, and the Patron Angel of all who forgives. Rabbinical tradition considers him to be the angel of mercy. Zadkiel was said to be the Angel who prevented Abraham from sacrificing his son, Isaac.



Zadkiel

In rabbinic writings Zadkiel belongs to the order of Hashmallim (equated with the Dominations or Dominions), and considered by some sources to be chief of that order (others sources name Hashmal or Zacharael). In Maseket Azilut Zadkiel/Hesediel is listed as co-chief with Gabriel of the order of Shinanim. As an angel of mercy, some texts claim that Zadkiel is the unnamed biblical Angel of the Lord who holds back Abraham to prevent the patriarch from sacrificing his son, and because of this is usually shown holding a dagger. Other texts cite Michael or Tadhil or some other angel as the angel intended, while others interpret the Angel of the Lord as a theophany. Zadkiel is one of two standard bearers (along with Jophiel) who follow directly behind Michael as the head archangel enters battle. Zadkiel is associated with the color violet.

In Jewish mysticism and Western ritual magic, Zadkiel is associated with the planet Jupiter. The angel's position in the Sephirot is fourth, which corresponds to mercy. In the Bible, Zephon was a son of Eliphaz (Esau's eldest son). According to the book of Genesis, his brothers were Omar, Teman, Gatam, Kenaz and Amalek. In the Kabbalistic "Treatise on the Left Emanation" by Isaac ha-Cohen of Soria, Zephon (called Tzephon) is one of the angels associated with the 6th sephira, Tiphereth.

Zepho was an angel, sent by the archangel Gabriel together with Ithuriel, to find out the location of Satan after his fall. In Canaanite Religion Zephon was also identified with Jebel Aqra, the home of the Elohim, from which Yahu was cast out. According to John Milton, Zephon is a cherub and a guardian prince of Paradise.

So, these were the famous angels various cultures and mythological books. Now, let us move towards the others.

Greek Gods and their Myths

The ancient Greeks would pray on their feet, with their hands up to the sky while they were praising Zeus and the other heavenly gods.

Whenever they wanted to worship Hades, the King of the Underworld, or other deities of the underworld, they would kneel down to the earth, powerfully hitting the earth with their hands in order to be heard loudly.

In their prayers, the ancient Greeks asked for help and support from the god or the goddess they were referring to, reminding them of all the good deeds they had done for them. They offered goods such as wine, oil, milk, sweets and nuts and sacrificed the fat and bones of animals such as rams, ewes, cows, bulls and goats, depending on what they believed that their gods preferred.

According to some beliefs, it had even come to attempts of human sacrifices, in order to worship deities such as Hades or Artemis, the goddess of the hunt.

Would a god find out that a human did not praise him like he should; the punishment was usually heavy and oftentimes eternal, like in the case of Meropis, who was transformed by Athena, the goddess of wisdom, into an owl because of her impudence.

Offers and sacrifices were made also to the dead, to honor them and have their protection. The ancient Greeks believed that the dead lived in Hades (the Underworld) and enjoyed the offers from their relatives.

Perirrhanteria, which was a marble water basin set up near altars, was used from the 7th century B.C. for ritual purification of the worshippers and to sprinkle the sacrificed animals. The basin is stored in the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus. The **Judgement of Paris** is a story from Greek mythology, which was one of the events that led up to the Trojan War and (in slightly later versions of the story) to the foundation of Rome.

As with many mythological tales, details vary depending on the source. The brief allusion to the Judgement in the *Iliad* (24.25–30) shows that the episode initiating all the subsequent action was already familiar to its audience; a fuller version was told in the *Cypria*, a lost work of the Epic Cycle,



of which only fragments (and a reliable summary) remain. The later writers Ovid (*Heroides* 16.71ff, 149–152 and 5.35f), Lucian (*Dialogues of the Gods* 20), The *Bibliotheca* (*Epitome* E.3.2) and Hyginus (*Fabulae* 92), retell the story with skeptical, ironic or popularizing agendas. It appeared wordlessly on the ivory and gold votive chest of the 7th-century BC tyrant Cypselus at Olympia, which was described by Pausanias as showing:

... Hermes bringing to Alexander [i.e. Paris] the son of Priam the goddesses of whose beauty he is to judge, the inscription on them being: 'Here is Hermes, who is showing to Alexander, that he may arbitrate concerning their beauty, Hera, Athena and Aphrodite.

The subject was favoured by painters of Red-figure pottery as early as the sixth century BC, and remained popular in Greek and Roman art, before enjoying a significant revival, as an opportunity to show three female nudes, in the Renaissance.

Sandro Botticelli, c. 1485-1488. This is one of the very few versions in which all three goddesses are fully clothed.

It is recounted that Zeus held a banquet in celebration of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis (parents of Achilles). However, Eris, goddess of discord was not invited, for she would have made the party unpleasant for everyone. Angered by this snub, Eris arrived at the celebration with a golden apple from the Garden of the Hesperides, which she threw into the proceedings as a prize of beauty. According to some later versions, upon the apple was the inscription *kallistēi*, “for the fairest one”.

Three goddesses claimed the apple: Hera, Athena and Aphrodite. They asked Zeus to judge which of them was fairest, and eventually he, reluctant to favor any claim himself, declared that Paris, a Trojan mortal, would judge their cases, for he had recently shown his exemplary fairness in a contest in which Ares in bull form had bested Paris’s own prize bull, and the shepherd-prince had unhesitatingly awarded the prize to the god.

Thus it happened that, with Hermes as their guide, the three candidates bathed in the spring of Ida, then confronted Paris on Mount Ida in the climactic moment that is the crux of the tale. While Paris inspected them, each attempted with her powers to bribe him; Hera offered to make him king of Europe and Asia, Athena offered wisdom and skill in war, and Aphrodite,

who had the Charites and the Horai to enhance her charms with flowers and song (according to a fragment of the *Cypria* quoted by Athenagoras of Athens), offered the world's most beautiful woman (Euripides, *Andromache*, l.284, *Helena* l. 676). This was Helen of Sparta, wife of the Greek king Menelaus. Paris accepted Aphrodite's gift and awarded the apple to her, receiving Helen as well as the enmity of the Greeks and especially of Hera. The Greeks' expedition to retrieve Helen from Paris in Troy is the mythological basis of the Trojan War.

The mytheme of the Judgement of Paris naturally offered artists the opportunity to depict a sort of beauty contest between three beautiful female nudes, but the myth, at least since Euripides, rather concerns a choice among the gifts that each goddess embodies. The bribery involved is ironic and a late ingredient.

According to a tradition suggested by Alfred J. Van Windekens, objectively, "cow-eyed" Hera was indeed the most beautiful, not Aphrodite. However, Hera was the goddess of the marital order and of cuckolded wives, amongst other things. She was often portrayed as the shrewish, jealous wife of Zeus, who himself often escaped from her controlling ways by cheating on her with other women, mortal and immortal. She had fidelity and chastity in mind and was careful to be modest when Paris was inspecting her. Aphrodite, though not as objectively beautiful as Hera, was the goddess of sexuality, and was effortlessly more sexual and charming before him. Thus, she was able to sway Paris into judging her the fairest. Athena's beauty is rarely commented in the myths, perhaps because Greeks held her up as an asexual being, being able to "overcome" her "womanly weaknesses" to become both wise and talented in war (both considered male domains by the Greeks). Her rage at losing makes her join the Greeks in the battle against Paris' Trojans, a key event in the turning point of the war.

In Greek mythology, the **Trojan War** was waged against the city of Troy by the Achaeans (Greeks) after Paris of Troy took Helen from her husband Menelaus, king of Sparta. The war is one of the most important events in Greek mythology and has been narrated through many works of Greek literature, most notably through Homer's *Iliad*. The *Iliad* relates a part of the last year of the siege of Troy; the *Odyssey* describes the journey home of Odysseus, one of the war's heroes. Other parts of the war are described in a cycle of epic poems, which have survived through fragments. Episodes from the war provided material for Greek tragedy and other works of Greek literature, and for Roman poets including Virgil and Ovid.

The war originated from a quarrel between the goddesses Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite, after Eris, the goddess of strife and discord, gave them a golden apple, sometimes known as the Apple of Discord, marked “for the fairest”. Zeus sent the goddesses to Paris, who judged that Aphrodite, as the “fairest”, should receive the apple. In exchange, Aphrodite made Helen, the most beautiful of all women and wife of Menelaus, fall in love with Paris, who took her to Troy. Agamemnon, king of Mycenae and the brother of Helen’s husband Menelaus, led an expedition of Achaean troops to Troy and besieged the city for ten years because of Paris’ insult. After the deaths of many heroes, including the Achaeans Achilles and Ajax, and the Trojans Hector and Paris, the city fell to the ruse of the Trojan Horse. The Achaeans slaughtered the Trojans (except for some of the women and children whom they kept or sold as slaves) and desecrated the temples, thus earning the gods’ wrath. Few of the Achaeans returned safely to their homes and many founded colonies in distant shores. The Romans later traced their origin to Aeneas, one of the Trojans, who was said to have led the surviving Trojans to modern-day Italy.

The ancient Greeks treated the Trojan War as a historical event that had taken place in the 13th or 12th century BC and believed that Troy was located near the Dardanelles in what is now Turkey. As of the mid-19th century, both the war and the city were widely believed to be non-historical. In 1868, however, the German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann met Frank Calvert, who convinced Schliemann that Troy was at Hissarlik and Schliemann took over Calvert’s excavations on property belonging to Calvert; this claim is now accepted by most scholars. Whether there is any historical reality behind the Trojan War is an open question. Many scholars believe that there is a historical core to the tale, though this may simply mean that the Homeric stories are a fusion of various tales of sieges and expeditions by Mycenaean Greeks during the Bronze Age. Those who believe that the stories of the Trojan War are derived from a specific historical conflict usually date it to the 12th or 11th centuries BC, often preferring the dates given by Eratosthenes, 1194–1184 BC, which roughly corresponds with archaeological evidence of a catastrophic burning of Troy VIIa.

The events of the Trojan War are found in many works of Greek literature and depicted in numerous works of Greek art. There is no single, authoritative text which tells the entire events of the war. Instead, the story is assembled from a variety of sources, some of which report contradictory versions of the events. The most important literary sources are the two epic poems traditionally credited to Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, composed

sometime between the 9th and 6th centuries BC. Each poem narrates only a part of the war. The *Iliad* covers a short period in the last year of the siege of Troy, while the *Odyssey* concerns Odysseus's return to his home island of Ithaca, following the sack of Troy.

Other parts of the Trojan War were told in the poems of the Epic Cycle, also known as the Cyclic Epics: the *Cypria*, *Aethiopis*, *Little Iliad*, *Iliou Persis*, *Nostoi*, and *Telegony*. Though these poems survive only in fragments, their content is known from a summary included in Proclus' *Chrestomathy*. The authorship of the Cyclic Epics is uncertain. It is generally thought that the poems were written down in the 7th and 6th century BC, after the composition of the Homeric poems, though it is widely believed that they were based on earlier traditions. Both the Homeric epics and the Epic Cycle take origin from oral tradition. Even after the composition of the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and the Cyclic Epics, the myths of the Trojan War were passed on orally, in many genres of poetry and through non-poetic storytelling. Events and details of the story that are only found in later authors may have been passed on through oral tradition and could be as old as the Homeric poems. Visual art, such as vase-painting, was another medium in which myths of the Trojan War circulated.

In later age's playwrights, historians, and other intellectuals would create works inspired by the Trojan War. The three great tragedians of Athens, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, wrote many dramas that portray episodes from the Trojan War. Among Roman writers the most important is the 1st century BC poet Virgil. In Book 2 of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas narrates the sack of Troy; this section of the poem is thought to rely on material from the Cyclic Epic *Iliou Persis*.

According to Greek mythology, Zeus had become king of the gods by overthrowing his father Cronus; Cronus in turn had overthrown his father Uranus. Zeus was not faithful to his wife and sister Hera, and had many relationships from which many children were born. Since Zeus believed that there were too many people populating the earth, he envisioned Momus or Themis, who was to use the Trojan War as a means to depopulate the Earth, especially of his demigod descendants.

Zeus came to learn from either Themis or Prometheus, after Heracles had released him from Caucasus, that, like his father Cronus, one of his sons

would overthrow him. Another prophecy stated that a son of the sea-nymph Thetis, with whom Zeus fell in love after gazing upon her in the oceans off the Greek coast, would become greater than his father. Possibly for one or both of these reasons, Thetis was betrothed to an elderly human king, Peleus son of Aiakos, either upon Zeus' orders, or because she wished to please Hera, who had raised her.

All of the gods were invited to Peleus and Thetis' wedding and brought many gifts, except Eris (the goddess of discord), who was stopped at the door by Hermes, on Zeus' order. Insulted, she threw from the door a gift of her own: a golden apple on which was inscribed the word *Kallistēi* ("To the fairest"). The apple was claimed by Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. They quarreled bitterly over it, and none of the other gods would venture an opinion favoring one, for fear of earning the enmity of the other two. Eventually, Zeus ordered Hermes to lead the three goddesses to Paris, a prince of Troy, who, unaware of his ancestry, was being raised as a shepherd in Mount Ida, because of a prophecy that he would be the downfall of Troy. After bathing in the spring of Ida, the goddesses appeared to him naked, either for the sake of winning or at Paris' request. Paris was unable to decide between them, so the goddesses resorted to bribes. Athena offered Paris wisdom, skill in battle, and the abilities of the greatest warriors; Hera offered him political power and control of all of Asia; and Aphrodite offered him the love of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen of Sparta. Paris awarded the apple to Aphrodite, and, after several adventures, returned to Troy, where he was recognized by his royal family.

Peleus and Thetis bore a son, whom they named Achilles. It was foretold that he would either die of old age after an uneventful life, or die young in a battlefield and gain immortality through poetry. Furthermore, when Achilles was nine years old, Calchas had prophesied that Troy could not again fall without his help. A number of sources credit Thetis with attempting to make Achilles immortal when he was an infant. Some of these states that she held him over fire every night to burn away his mortal parts and rubbed him with ambrosia during the day, but Peleus discovered her actions and stopped her. According to some versions of this story, Thetis had already destroyed several sons in this manner, and Peleus' action therefore saved his son's life. Other sources state that Thetis bathed Achilles in the River Styx, the river that runs to the under world, making him invulnerable wherever he had touched the water. Because she had held him by the heel, it was not immersed during the bathing and thus the heel remained mortal and vulnerable to injury (hence

the expression “Achilles heel” for an isolated weakness). He grew up to be the greatest of all mortal warriors. After Calchas’ prophecy, Thetis hid Achilles in Skyros at the court of king Lycomedes, where he was disguised as a girl. At a crucial point in the war, she assists her son by providing weapons divinely forged by Hephaestus.

The most beautiful woman in the world was Helen, one of the daughters of Tyndareus, King of Sparta. Her mother was Leda, who had been either raped or seduced by Zeus in the form of a swan. Accounts differ over which of Leda’s four children, two pairs of twins, were fathered by Zeus and which by Tyndareus. However, Helen is usually credited as Zeus’ daughter, and sometimes Nemesis is credited as her mother. Helen had scores of suitors, and her father was unwilling to choose one for fear the others would retaliate violently.

Finally, one of the suitors, Odysseus of Ithaca, proposed a plan to solve the dilemma. In exchange for Tyndareus’ support of his own suit towards Penelope, he suggested that Tyndareus require all of Helen’s suitors to promise that they would defend the marriage of Helen, regardless of whom he chose. The suitors duly swore the required oath on the severed pieces of a horse, although not without a certain amount of grumbling.

Tyndareus chooses Menelaus. Menelaus was a political choice on her father’s part. He had wealth and power. He had humbly not petitioned for her himself, but instead sent his brother Agamemnon on his behalf. He had promised Aphrodite a hecatomb, a sacrifice of 100 oxen, if he won Helen, but forgot about it and earned her wrath. Menelaus inherited Tyndareus’ throne of Sparta with Helen as his queen when her brothers, Castor and Pollux, became gods, and when Agamemnon married Helen’s sister Clytemnestra and took back the throne of Mycenae.

Paris, under the guise of a supposed diplomatic mission, went to Sparta to get Helen and bring her back to Troy. Before Helen could look up to see him enter the palace, she was shot with an arrow from Eros, otherwise known as Cupid, and fell in love with Paris when she saw him, as promised by Aphrodite. Menelaus had left for Crete to bury his uncle, Catreus. Hera, still jealous over the judgement of Paris, sent a storm. The storm caused the lovers to land in Egypt, where the gods replaced Helen with a likeness of her made of clouds, Nephele. The myth of Helen being switched is attributed to the 6th century B.C. Sicilian poet Stesichorus. For Homer the true Helen was in Troy. The ship

then landed in Sidon before reaching Troy. Paris, fearful of getting caught, spent some time there and then sailed to Troy.

Paris' abduction of Helen had several precedents. Io was taken from Mycenae, Europa was taken from Phoenicia, Jason took Medea from Colchis, and the Trojan princess Hesione had been taken by Heracles, who gave her to Telamon of Salamis. According to Herodotus, Paris was emboldened by these examples to steal himself a wife from Greece, and expected no retribution, since there had been none in the other cases.

According to Homer, Menelaus and his ally, Odysseus, traveled to Troy, where they unsuccessfully sought to recover Helen by diplomatic means.

Menelaus then asked Agamemnon to uphold his oath, which, as one of Helen's suitors, was to defend her marriage regardless of which suitor had been chosen. Agamemnon agreed and sent emissaries to all the Achaean kings and princes to call them to observe their oaths and retrieve Helen.

Since Menelaus's wedding, Odysseus had married Penelope and fathered a son, Telemachus. In order to avoid the war, he feigned madness and sowed his fields with salt. Palamedes outwitted him by placing his infant son in front of the plough's path, and Odysseus turned aside, unwilling to kill his son, so revealing his sanity and forcing him to join the war.

According to Homer, however, Odysseus supported the military adventure from the beginning, and traveled the region with Pylos' king, Nestor, to recruit forces.

At Skyros, Achilles had an affair with the king's daughter Deidamia, resulting in a child, Neoptolemus. Odysseus, Telamonian Ajax, and Achilles' tutor Phoenix went to retrieve Achilles. Achilles' mother disguised him as a woman so that he would not have to go to war, but, according to one story, they blew a horn, and Achilles revealed himself by seizing a spear to fight intruders, rather than fleeing. According to another story, they disguised themselves as merchants bearing trinkets and weaponry, and Achilles was marked out from the other women for admiring weaponry instead of clothes and jewelry.

Pausanias said that, according to Homer, Achilles did not hide in Skyros, but rather conquered the island, as part of the Trojan War.

The Achaean forces first gathered at Aulis. All the suitors sent their forces except King Cinyras of Cyprus. Though he sent breastplates to Agamemnon and promised to send 50 ships, he sent only one real ship, led by the son

of Mygdalion, and 49 ships made of clay. Idomeneus was willing to lead the Cretan contingent in Mycenae's war against Troy, but only as a co-commander, which he was granted. The last commander to arrive was Achilles, who was then 15 years old.

Following a sacrifice to Apollo, a snake slithered from the altar to a sparrow's nest in a plane tree nearby. It ate the mother and her nine babies, and then was turned to stone. Calchas interpreted this as a sign that Troy would fall in the tenth year of the war.

When the Achaeans left for the war, they did not know the way, and accidentally landed in Mysia, ruled by King Telephus, son of Heracles, who had led a contingent of Arcadians to settle there. In the battle, Achilles wounded Telephus, who had killed Thersander. Because the wound would not heal, Telephus asked an oracle, "What will happen to the wound?". The oracle responded, "He that wounded shall heal". The Achaean fleet then set sail and was scattered by a storm. Achilles landed in Scyros and married Deidamia. A new gathering was set again in Aulis.

Telephus went to Aulis, and either pretended to be a beggar, asking Agamemnon to help heal his wound, or kidnapped Orestes and held him for ransom, demanding the wound be healed. Achilles refused, claiming to have no medical knowledge. Odysseus reasoned that the spear that had inflicted the wound must be able to heal it. Pieces of the spear were scraped off onto the wound, and Telephus was healed. Telephus then showed the Achaeans the route to Troy.

Some scholars have regarded the expedition against Telephus and its resolution as a derivative reworking of elements from the main story of the Trojan War, but it has also been seen as fitting the story-pattern of the "preliminary adventure" that anticipates events and themes from the main narrative, and therefore as likely to be "early and integral".

Eight years after the storm had scattered them, the fleet of more than a thousand ships was gathered again. But when they had all reached Aulis, the winds ceased. The prophet Calchas stated that the goddess Artemis was punishing Agamemnon for killing either a sacred deer or a deer in a sacred grove, and boasting that he was a better hunter than she. The only way to appease Artemis, he said, was to sacrifice Iphigenia, who was either the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, or of Helen and Theseus entrusted to Clytemnestra when Helen married Menelaus. Agamemnon refused, and the other commanders threatened to make Palamedes commander of the

expedition. According to some versions, Agamemnon relented, but others claim that he sacrificed a deer in her place, or that at the last moment; Artemis took pity on the girl, and took her to be a maiden in one of her temples, substituting a lamb. Hesiod says that Iphigenia became the goddess Hecate.

The Achaean forces are described in detail in the Catalogue of Ships, in the second book of the *Iliad*. They consisted of 28 contingents from mainland Greece, the Peloponnese, the Dodecanese islands, Crete, and Ithaca, comprising 1186 pentekonteres, ships with 50 rowers. Thucydides says that according to tradition there were about 1200 ships, and that the Boeotian ships had 120 men, while Philoctetes' ships only had the fifty rowers, these probably being maximum and minimum. These numbers would mean a total force of 70,000 to 130,000 men. Another catalogue of ships is given by the *Bibliotheca* that differs somewhat but agrees in numbers. Some scholars have claimed that Homer's catalogue is an original Bronze Age document, possibly the Achaean commander's order of operations. Others believe it was a fabrication of Homer.

The second book of the *Iliad* also lists the Trojan allies, consisting of the Trojans themselves, led by Hector, and various allies listed as Dardanians led by Aeneas, Zeleians,Adrasteians, Percotians, Pelasgians, Thracians, Ciconian spearmen, Paionian archers, Halizones, Mysians, Phrygians, Maeonians, Miletians, Lycians led by Sarpedon and Carians. Nothing is said of the Trojan language; the Carians are specifically said to be barbarian-speaking, and the allied contingents are said to have spoken multiple languages, requiring orders to be translated by their individual commanders. It should be noted, however, that the Trojans and Achaeans in the *Iliad* share the same religion, same culture and the enemy heroes speak to each other in the same language, though this could be dramatic effect.

Philoctetes was Heracles' friend, and because he lit Heracles's funeral pyre when no one else would, he received Heracles' bow and arrows. He sailed with seven ships full of men to the Trojan War, where he was planning on fighting for the Achaeans. They stopped either at Chryse Island for supplies, or in Tenedos, along with the rest of the fleet. Philoctetes was then bitten by a snake. The wound festered and had a foul smell; on Odysseus's advice, the Atreidae ordered Philoctetes to stay on Lemnos. Medon took control of Philoctetes's men. While landing on Tenedos, Achilles killed king Tenes, son of Apollo, despite a warning by his mother that if he did so he would be killed himself by Apollo. From Tenedos, Agamemnon sent an embassy to Priam,

composed of Menelaus, Odysseus, and Palamedes, asking for Helen's return. The embassy was refused.

Philoctetes stayed on Lemnos for ten years, which was a deserted island according to Sophocles' tragedy *Philoctetes*, but according to earlier tradition, was populated by Minyans.

Calchas had prophesied that the first Achaean to walk on land after stepping off a ship would be the first to die. Thus even the leading Greeks hesitated to land. Finally, Protesilaus, leader of the Phylaceans, landed first. Odysseus had tricked him, in throwing his own shield down to land on, so that while he was first to leap off his ship, he was not the first to land on Trojan soil. Hector killed Protesilaus in single combat, though the Trojans conceded the beach. In the second wave of attacks, Achilles killed Cycnus, son of Poseidon. The Trojans then fled to the safety of the walls of their city. Protesilaus had killed many Trojans but was killed by Hector in most versions of the story, though others list Aeneas, Achates, or Ephyraeus as his slayer. The Achaeans buried him as a god on the Thracian peninsula, across the Troad. After Protesilaus' death, his brother, Podarces, took command of his troops.



King Priam requests to Achilles to return the body of Hector for funerals

The Achaeans besieged Troy for nine years. This part of the war is the least developed among surviving sources, which prefer to talk about events in the last year of the war. After the initial landing the army was gathered in its entirety again only in the tenth year. Thucydides deduces that this was due to lack of money. They raided the Trojan allies and spent time farming the Thracian peninsula. Troy was never completely besieged, thus it maintained communications with the interior of Asia Minor. Reinforcements continued to come until the very end. The Achaeans controlled only the entrance to the Dardanelles, and Troy and her allies controlled the shortest point at Abydos and Sestus and communicated with allies in Europe.

Achilles and Ajax were the most active of the Achaeans, leading separate armies to raid lands of Trojan allies. According to Homer, Achilles conquered 11 cities and 12 islands. According to Apollodorus, he raided the land of Aeneas in the Troad region and stole his cattle. He also captured Lyrnassus, Pedasus, and many of the neighbouring cities, and killed Troilus, son of Priam, who was still a youth; it was said that if he reached 20 years of age, Troy would not fall. According to Apollodorus,

He also took Lesbos and Phocaea, then Colophon, and Smyrna, and Clazomenae, and Cyme; and afterwards Aegialus and Tenos, the so-called Hundred Cities; then, in order, Adramytium and Side; then Endium, and Linaeum, and Colone. He took also Hypoplacian Thebes and Lyrnessus, and further Antandrus, and many other cities.

Kakrides comments that the list is wrong in that it extends too far into the south. Other sources talk of Achilles taking Pedasus, Monenia, Mythemna (in Lesbos), and Peisidice.

Among the loot from these cities were Briseis, from Lyrnessus, who was awarded to him, and Chryseis, from Hypoplacian Thebes, who was awarded to Agamemnon. Achilles captured Lycaon, son of Priam, while he was cutting branches in his father's orchards. Patroclus sold him as a slave in Lemnos, where he was bought by Eetion of Imbros and brought back to Troy. Only 12 days later Achilles slew him, after the death of Patroclus.

Ajax son of Telamon laid waste the Thracian peninsula of which Polymestor, a son-in-law of Priam, was king. Polymestor surrendered Polydorus, one of Priam's children, of whom he had custody. He then attacked the town of the Phrygian king Teleutas, killed him in single combat and carried off his daughter Tecmessa. Ajax also hunted the Trojan flocks, both on Mount Ida and in the countryside.

Numerous paintings on pottery have suggested a tale not mentioned in the literary traditions. At some point in the war Achilles and Ajax were playing a board game (*petteia*). They were absorbed in the game and oblivious to the surrounding battle. The Trojans attacked and reached the heroes, who were only saved by an intervention of Athena.

Odysseus was sent to Thrace to return with grain, but came back empty-handed. When scorned by Palamedes, Odysseus challenged him to do better. Palamedes set out and returned with a shipload of grain.

Odysseus had never forgiven Palamedes for threatening the life of his son. In revenge, Odysseus conceived a plot where an incriminating letter was forged, from Priam to Palamedes, and gold was planted in Palamedes' quarters. The letter and gold were "discovered", and Agamemnon had Palamedes stoned to death for treason.

However, Pausanias, quoting the *Cypria*, says that Odysseus and Diomedes drowned Palamedes, while he was fishing, and Dictys says that Odysseus and Diomedes lured Palamedes into a well, which they said contained gold, and then stoned him to death.

Palamedes' father Nauplius sailed to the Troad and asked for justice, but was refused. In revenge, Nauplius traveled among the Achaean kingdoms and told the wives of the kings that they were bringing Trojan concubines to dethrone them. Many of the Greek wives were persuaded to betray their husbands, most significantly Agamemnon's wife, Clytemnestra, who was seduced by Aegisthus, son of Thyestes.

Near the end of the ninth year since the landing, the Achaean army, tired from the fighting and from the lack of supplies, mutinied against their leaders and demanded to return to their homes. According to the *Cypria*, Achilles forced the army to stay. According to Apollodorus, Agamemnon brought the Wine Growers, daughters of Anius, son of Apollo, who had the gift of producing by touch wine, wheat, and oil from the earth, in order to relieve the supply problem of the army.

Chryses, a priest of Apollo and father of Chryseis, came to Agamemnon to ask for the return of his daughter. Agamemnon refused, and insulted Chryses, who prayed to Apollo to avenge his ill-treatment. Enraged, Apollo afflicted the Achaean army with plague. Agamemnon was forced to return Chryseis to end the plague, and took Achilles' concubine Briseis as his own. Enraged at the dishonour Agamemnon had inflicted upon him, Achilles decided he would no longer fight. He asked his mother, Thetis, to intercede with Zeus, who agreed

to give the Trojans success in the absence of Achilles, the best warrior of the Achaeans.

After the withdrawal of Achilles, the Achaeans were initially successful. Both armies gathered in full for the first time since the landing. Menelaus and Paris fought a duel, which ended when Aphrodite snatched the beaten Paris from the field. With the truce broken, the armies began fighting again. Diomedes won great renown amongst the Achaeans, killing the Trojan hero Pandaros and nearly killing Aeneas, who was only saved by his mother, Aphrodite. With the assistance of Athena, Diomedes then wounded the gods Aphrodite and Ares. During the next days, however, the Trojans drove the Achaeans back to their camp and were stopped at the Achaean wall by Poseidon. The next day, though, with Zeus' help, the Trojans broke into the Achaean camp and were on the verge of setting fire to the Achaean ships. An earlier appeal to Achilles to return was rejected, but after Hector burned Protesilaus' ship, he allowed his close friend and relative Patroclus to go into battle wearing Achilles' armour and lead his army. Patroclus drove the Trojans all the way back to the walls of Troy, and was only prevented from storming the city by the intervention of Apollo. Patroclus was then killed by Hector, who took Achilles' armour from the body of Patroclus.

Achilles, maddened with grief, swore to kill Hector in revenge. He was reconciled with Agamemnon and received Briseis back, untouched by Agamemnon. He received a new set of arms, forged by the god Hephaestus, and returned to the battlefield. He slaughtered many Trojans, and nearly killed Aeneas, who was saved by Poseidon. Achilles fought with the river god Scamander, and a battle of the gods followed. The Trojan army returned to the city, except for Hector, who remained outside the walls because he was tricked by Athena. Achilles killed Hector, and afterwards he dragged Hector's body from his chariot and refused to return the body to the Trojans for burial. The Achaeans then conducted funeral games for Patroclus. Afterwards, Priam came to Achilles' tent, guided by Hermes, and asked Achilles to return Hector's body. The armies made a temporary truce to allow the burial of the dead. The *Iliad* ends with the funeral of Hector.

Shortly after the burial of Hector, Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, arrived with her warriors. Penthesilea, daughter of Otrere and Ares, had accidentally killed her sister Hippolyte. She was purified from this action by Priam, and in exchange she fought for him and killed many, including Machaon (according to Pausanias, Machaon was killed by Eurypylos), and according to another version, Achilles himself, who was resurrected at the request of

Thetis. Penthesilia was then killed by Achilles who fell in love with her beauty after her death. Thersites, a simple soldier and the ugliest Achaean, taunted Achilles over his love and gouged out Penthesilea's eyes. Achilles slew Thersites, and after a dispute sailed to Lesbos, where he was purified for his murder by Odysseus after sacrificing to Apollo, Artemis, and Leto.



Queen of Amazons

While they were away, Memnon of Ethiopia, son of Tithonus and Eos, came with his host to help his stepbrother Priam. He did not come directly from Ethiopia, but either from Susa in Persia, conquering all the peoples in between, or from the Caucasus, leading an army of Ethiopians and Indians. Like Achilles, he wore armour made by Hephaestus. In the ensuing battle, Memnon killed Antilochus, who took one of Memnon's blows to save his father Nestor. Achilles and Memnon then fought. Zeus weighed the fate of the two heroes; the weight containing that of Memnon sank, and he was slain by Achilles. Achilles chased the Trojans to their city, which he entered. The gods, seeing that he had killed too many of their children, decided that it was his time to die. He was killed after Paris shot a poisoned arrow that was guided by Apollo. In another version he was killed by a knife to the back (or heel) by Paris, while marrying Polyxena, daughter of Priam, in the temple of Thymbraean Apollo, the site where he had earlier killed Troilus. Both versions conspicuously deny the killer any sort of valour, saying Achilles remained undefeated on the battlefield. His bones were mingled with those of Patroclus, and funeral games were held. Like Ajax, he is represented as living after his death in the island of Leuke, at the mouth of the Danube River, where he is married to Helen.

A great battle raged around the dead Achilles. Ajax held back the Trojans, while Odysseus carried the body away. When Achilles' armour was offered to the smartest warrior, the two that had saved his body came forward as competitors. Agamemnon, unwilling to undertake the invidious duty of deciding between the two competitors, referred the dispute to the decision of the Trojan prisoners, inquiring of them which of the two heroes had done most harm to the Trojans. Alternatively, the Trojans and Pallas Athena were the judges in that, following Nestor's advice; spies were sent to the walls to overhear what was said. A girl said that Ajax was braver:

For Aias took up and carried out of the strife the hero, Peleus'

Son: this great Odysseus cared not to do.

To this, another replied by Athena's contrivance:

Why, what is this you say? A thing against reason and untrue!

Even a woman could carry a load once a man had put it on her

Shoulder; but she could not fight. For she would fail with fear

if she should fight. (Scholiast on Aristophanes, Knights 1056 and Aristophanes IB)

According to Pindar, the decision was made by secret ballot among the Achaeans. In all story versions, the arms were awarded to Odysseus. Driven mad with grief, Ajax desired to kill his comrades, but Athena caused him to mistake the cattle and their herdsman for the Achaean warriors. In his frenzy he scourged two rams, believing them to be Agamemnon and Menelaus. In the morning, he came to his senses and killed himself by jumping on the sword that had been given to him by Hector, so that it pierced his armpit, his only vulnerable part. According to an older tradition, he was killed by the Trojans who, seeing he was invulnerable, attacked him with clay until he was covered by it and could no longer move, thus dying of starvation.

After the tenth year, it was prophesied that Troy could not fall without Heracles' bow, which was with Philoctetes in Lemnos. Odysseus and Diomedes retrieved Philoctetes, whose wound had healed. Philoctetes then shot and killed Paris.

According to Apollodorus, Paris' brothers Helenus and Deiphobus vied over the hand of Helen. Deiphobus prevailed, and Helenus abandoned Troy for Mt. Ida. Calchas said that Helenus knew the prophecies concerning the fall of Troy, so Odysseus waylaid Helenus. Under coercion, Helenus told the Achaeans that they would win if they retrieved Pelops' bones, persuaded Achilles' son Neoptolemus to fight for them, and stole the Trojan Palladium.



The Greeks retrieved Pelop's bones, and sent Odysseus to retrieve Neoptolemus, who was hiding from the war in King Lycomedes's court in Scyros. Odysseus gave him his father's arms. Eurypylos, son of Telephus, leading, according to Homer, a large force of *Kêteioi*, or Hittites or Mysians according to Apollodorus, arrived to aid the Trojans. He killed Machaon and Peneleos, but was slain by Neoptolemus.

Disguised as a beggar, Odysseus went to spy inside Troy, but was recognized by Helen. Homesick, Helen plotted with Odysseus. Later, with Helen's help, Odysseus and Diomedes stole the Palladium.

The end of the war came with one final plan. Odysseus devised a new ruse—a giant hollow wooden horse, an animal that was sacred to the Trojans.

It was built by Epeius and guided by Athena, from the wood of a cornel tree grove sacred to Apollo, with the inscription:

The Greeks dedicate this thank-offering to Athena for their return home.

The hollow horse was filled with soldiers led by Odysseus. The rest of the army burned the camp and sailed for Tenedos.

When the Trojans discovered that the Greeks were gone, believing the war was over, they “joyfully dragged the horse inside the city”, while they debated what to do with it. Some thought they ought to hurl it down from the rocks, others thought they should burn it, while others said they ought to dedicate it to Athena.

Both Cassandra and Laocoön warned against keeping the horse. While Cassandra had been given the gift of prophecy by Apollo, she was also cursed by Apollo never to be believed. Serpents then came out of the sea and devoured either Laocoön and one of his two sons, Laocoön and both his sons, or only his sons, a portent which so alarmed the followers of Aeneas that they withdrew to Ida. The Trojans decided to keep the horse and turned to a night of mad revelry and celebration. Sinon, an Achaean spy, signaled the fleet stationed at Tenedos when “It was midnight and the clear moon was rising” and the soldiers from inside the horse emerged and killed the guards.

The Achaeans entered the city and killed the sleeping population. A great massacre followed which continued into the day.

Blood ran in torrents, drenched was all the earth,

As Trojans and their alien helpers died.

Here were men lying quelled by bitter death

All up and down the city in their blood.

The Trojans, fuelled with desperation, fought back fiercely, despite being disorganized and leaderless. With the fighting at its height, some donned fallen enemies’ attire and launched surprise counterattacks in the chaotic street fighting. Other defenders hurled down roof tiles and anything else heavy down on the rampaging attackers. The outlook was grim though, and eventually the remaining defenders were destroyed along with the whole city.

Neoptolemus killed Priam, who had taken refuge at the altar of Zeus of the Courtyard. Menelaus killed Deiphobus, Helen’s husband after Paris’ death, and also intended to kill Helen, but, overcome by her beauty, threw down his sword and took her to the ships.

Ajax the Lesser raped Cassandra on Athena's altar while she was clinging to her statue. Because of Ajax's impiety, the Achaeans, urged by Odysseus, wanted to stone him to death, but he fled to Athena's altar, and was spared.

Antenor, who had given hospitality to Menelaus and Odysseus when they asked for the return of Helen, and who had advocated so, was spared, along with his family. Aeneas took his father on his back and fled, and, according to Apollodorus, was allowed to go because of his piety.

The Greeks then burned the city and divided the spoils. Cassandra was awarded to Agamemnon. Neoptolemus got Andromache, wife of Hector, and Odysseus was given Hecuba, Priam's wife.

The Achaeans threw Hector's infant son Astyanax down from the walls of Troy, either out of cruelty and hate or to end the royal line, and the possibility of a son's revenge. They (by usual tradition Neoptolemus) also sacrificed the Trojan princess Polyxena on the grave of Achilles as demanded by his ghost, either as part of his spoil or because she had betrayed him. Aethra, Theseus' mother, and one of Helen's handmaids, was rescued by her grandsons, Demophon and Acamas.

The gods were very angry over the destruction of their temples and other sacrilegious acts by the Achaeans, and decided that most would not return home. A storm fell on the returning fleet off Tenos Island. Additionally, Nauplius, in revenge for the murder of his son Palamedes, set up false lights in Cape Caphereus (also known today as Cavo D'Oro, in Euboea) and many were shipwrecked.

Agamemnon had made it back to Argos safely with Cassandra in his possession after some stormy weather. He and Cassandra were slain by Aegisthus (in the oldest versions of the story) or by Clytemnestra or by both of them. Electra and Orestes later avenged their father, but Orestes was the one who was chased by the Furies.

Nestor, who had the best conduct in Troy and did not take part in the looting, was the only hero who had a fast and safe return. Those of his army that survived the war also reached home with him safely, but later left and colonised Metapontium in Southern Italy.

Ajax the Lesser, who had endured more than the others the wrath of the Gods, never returned. His ship was wrecked by a storm sent by Athena, who borrowed one of Zeus' thunderbolts and tore it to pieces. The crew managed to land in a rock, but Poseidon struck it, and Ajax fell in the sea and drowned. He was buried by Thetis in or Delos.

Teucer, son of Telamon and half-brother of Ajax, stood trial by his father for his half-brother's death. He was disowned by his father and wasn't allowed back on Salamis Island. He was at sea near Phreattys in Peiraeus. He was acquitted of responsibility but found guilty of negligence because he did not return his dead body or his arms. He left with his army (who took their wives) and founded Salamis in Cyprus. The Athenians later created a political myth that his son left his kingdom to Theseus' sons (and not to Megara).

Neoptolemus, following the advice of Helenus, who accompanied him when he traveled over land, was always accompanied by Andromache. He met Odysseus and they buried Achilles' teacher Phoenix on the land of the Ciconians. They then conquered the land of the Molossians (Epirus) and Neoptolemus had a child by Andromache, Molossus, to whom he later gave the throne. Thus the kings of Epirus claimed their lineage from Achilles, and so did Alexander the Great, whose mother was of that royal house. Alexander the Great and the kings of Macedon also claimed to be descended from Heracles. Helenus founded a city in Molossia and inhabited it, and Neoptolemus gave him his mother Deidamia as wife. After Peleus died he succeeded Phtia's throne. He had a feud with Orestes (son of Agamemnon) over Menelaus' daughter Hermione, and was killed in Delphi, where he was buried. In Roman myths, the kingdom of Phtia was taken over by Helenus, who married Andromache. They offered hospitality to other Trojan refugees, including Aeneas, who paid a visit there during his wanderings.



Diomedes was first thrown by a storm on the coast of Lycia, where he was to be sacrificed to Ares by king Lycus, but Callirrhoe, the king's daughter, took pity upon him, and assisted him in escaping. He then accidentally landed in Attica, in Phaleron. The Athenians, unaware that they were allies, attacked them. Many were killed, and Demophon took the Palladium. He finally landed in Argos, where he found his wife Aegialeia committing adultery. In disgust, he left for Aetolia. According to later traditions, he had some adventures and founded Canusium and Argyrippa in Southern Italy.

Philoctetes, due to sedition, was driven from his city and emigrated to Italy, where he founded the cities of Petilia, Old Crimissa, and Chone, between Croton and Thurii. After making war on the Leucanians he founded there a sanctuary of Apollo the Wanderer, to whom also he dedicated his bow.

According to Homer, Idomeneus reached his house safe and sound. Another tradition later formed. After the war, Idomeneus's ship hit a horrible storm. Idomeneus promised Poseidon that he would sacrifice the first living thing he saw when he returned home if Poseidon would save his ship and crew. The first living thing he saw was his son, whom Idomeneus duly sacrificed. The gods were angry at his murder of his own son and they sent a plague to Crete. His people sent him into exile to Calabria in Italy, and then to Colophon, in Asia Minor, where he died. Among the lesser Achaeans very few reached their homes.

According to the *Odyssey*, Menelaus's fleet was blown by storms to Crete and Egypt, where they were unable to sail away due to calm winds. Only five of his ships survived. Menelaus had to catch Proteus, a shape-shifting sea god, to find out what sacrifices to which gods he would have to make to guarantee safe passage. According to some stories the Helen who was taken by Paris was a fake, and the real Helen was in Egypt, where she was reunited with Menelaus. Proteus also told Menelaus that he was destined for Elysium (Heaven) after his death. Menelaus returned to Sparta with Helen eight years after he had left Troy.

Agamemnon returned home with Cassandra to Argos. His wife Clytemnestra (Helen's sister) was having an affair with Aegisthus, son of Thyestes, Agamemnon's cousin who had conquered Argos before Agamemnon himself retook it. Possibly out of vengeance for the death of Iphigenia, Clytemnestra plotted with her lover to kill Agamemnon. Cassandra foresaw this murder, and warned Agamemnon, but he disregarded her. He was killed, either at a feast or in his bath, according to different versions. Cassandra was also killed. Agamemnon's son Orestes, who had been away, returned and

conspired with his sister Electra to avenge their father. He killed Clytemnestra and Aegisthus and succeeded to his father's throne.

Odysseus' ten-year journey home to Ithaca was told in Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus and his men were blown far off course to lands unknown to the Achaeans; there Odysseus had many adventures, including the famous encounter with the Cyclops Polyphemus, and an audience with the seer Teiresias in Hades. On the island of Thrinacia, Odysseus' men ate the cattle sacred to the sun-god Helios. For this sacrilege Odysseus' ships were destroyed, and all his men perished. Odysseus had not eaten the cattle, and was allowed to live; he washed ashore on the island of Ogygia, and lived there with the nymph Calypso. After seven years, the gods decided to send Odysseus home; on a small raft, he sailed to Scheria, the home of the Phaeacians, who gave him passage to Ithaca.

Once in his home land, Odysseus traveled disguised as an old beggar. He was recognised by his dog, Argos, who died in his lap. He then discovered that his wife, Penelope, had been faithful to him during the 20 years he was absent, despite the countless suitors that were eating his food and spending his property. With the help of his son Telemachus, Athena, and Eumaeus, the swineherd, he killed all of them except Medon, who had been polite to Penelope, and Phemius, a local singer who had only been forced to help the suitors against Penelope. Penelope tested Odysseus and made sure it was him, and he forgave her. The next day the suitors' relatives tried to take revenge on him but they were stopped by Athena.

The *Telegony* picks up where the *Odyssey* leaves off, beginning with the burial of the dead suitors, and continues until the death of Odysseus. Some years after Odysseus' return, Telegonus, the son of Odysseus and Circe, came to Ithaca and plundered the island. Odysseus, attempting to fight off the attack, was killed by his unrecognized son. After Telegonus realized he had killed his father, he brought the body to his mother Circe, along with Telemachus and Penelope. Circe made them immortal; then Telegonus married Penelope and Telemachus married Circe.

The journey of the Trojan survivor Aeneas and his resettling of Trojan refugees in Italy are the subject of the Latin epic poem *Aeneid* by Virgil. Writing during the time of Augustus, Virgil has his hero give a first-person account of the fall of Troy in the second of the *Aeneid's* twelve books; the Trojan horse, which does not appear in "The Iliad", became legendary from Virgil's account.

Aeneas leads a group of survivors away from the city, among them his son Ascanius (also known as Iulus), his trumpeter Misenus, father Anchises, the healer Iapyx, his faithful sidekick Achates, and Mimas as a guide. His wife Creusa is killed during the sack of the city. Aeneas also carries the Lares and Penates of Troy, which the historical Romans claimed to preserve as guarantees of Rome's own security.

The Trojan survivors escape with a number of ships, seeking to establish a new homeland elsewhere. They land in several nearby countries that prove inhospitable, and are finally told by an oracle that they must return to the land of their forebears. They first try to establish themselves in Crete, where Dardanus had once settled, but find it ravaged by the same plague that had driven Idomeneus away. They find the colony led by Helenus and Andromache, but decline to remain. After seven years they arrive in Carthage, where Aeneas has an affair with Queen Dido. (Since according to tradition Carthage was founded in 814 BC, the arrival of Trojan refugees a few hundred years earlier exposes chronological difficulties within the mythic tradition.) Eventually the gods order Aeneas to continue onward, and he and his people arrive at the mouth of the Tiber River in Italy. Dido commits suicide, and Aeneas's betrayal of her was regarded as an element in the long enmity between Rome and Carthage that expressed itself in the Punic Wars and led to Roman hegemony.



At Cumae, the Sibyl leads Aeneas on an archetypal descent to the underworld, where the shade of his dead father serves as a guide; this book

of the *Aeneid* directly influenced Dante, who has Virgil act as his narrator's guide. Aeneas is given a vision of the future majesty of Rome, which it was his duty to found, and returns to the world of the living. He negotiates a settlement with the local king, Latinus, and was wed to his daughter, Lavinia. This triggered a war with other local tribes, which culminated in the founding of the settlement of Alba Longa, ruled by Aeneas and Lavinia's son Silvius. Roman myth attempted to reconcile two different founding myths: three hundred years later, in the more famous tradition, Remus founded Rome. The Trojan origins of Rome became particularly important in the propaganda of Julius Caesar, whose family claimed descent from Venus through Aeneas's son Iulus (hence the Latin *gens* name *Iulius*), and during the reign of Augustus; see for instance the and the "Troy Game" presented frequently by the dynasty.

Since this war was considered among the ancient Greeks as either the last event of the mythical age or the first event of the historical age, several dates are given for the fall of Troy. They usually derive from genealogies of kings. Ephorus gives 1135 B.C, Sosibius 1172 B.C, Eratosthenes 1184 B.C/1183 B.C, Timaeus 1193 B.C, the marble 1209 BC/1208 BC, Dicaearchus 1212 B.C, Herodotus around 1250 BC, Eretes 1291 B.C, while Douris 1334 B.C. As for the exact day Ephorus gives 23/24 Thargelion (May 6 or 7), Hellanicus 12 Thargelion (May 26) while others give the 23rd of Sciroforion (July 7) or the 23rd of Ponamos (October 7).

The glorious and rich city Homer describes was believed to be Troy VI by many twentieth century authors, destroyed in 1275 BC, probably by an earthquake. Its follower Troy VIIa, destroyed by fire at some point during the 1180s B.C, was long considered a poorer city, but since the excavation campaign of 1988 it has risen to the most likely candidate.

The historicity of the Trojan War is still subject to debate. Most classical Greeks thought that the war was a historical event, but many believed that the Homeric poems had exaggerated the events to suit the demands of poetry. For instance, the historian Thucydides, who is known for being critical, considers it a true event but doubts that 1,186 ships were sent to Troy. Euripides started changing Greek myths at will, including those of the Trojan War. Near year 100, Dio Chrysostom argued that while the war was historical, it ended with the Trojans winning, and the Greeks attempted to hide that fact. Around 1870 it was generally agreed in Western Europe that the Trojan War had never happened and Troy never existed. Then Heinrich Schliemann popularized his excavations at Hisarlik, which he and others believed to be Troy, and of the Mycenaean cities of Greece. Today many scholars agree that

the Trojan War is based on a historical core of a Greek expedition against the city of Troy, but few would argue that the Homeric poems faithfully represent the actual events of the war.

In November 2001, geologist John C. Kraft and classicist John V. Luce presented the results of investigations into the geology of the region that had started in 1977. The geologists compared the present geology with the landscapes and coastal features described in the *Iliad* and other classical sources, notably Strabo's *Geographia*. Their conclusion was that there is regularly a consistency between the location of Troy as identified by Schliemann (and other locations such as the Greek camp), the geological evidence, and descriptions of the topography and accounts of the battle in the *Iliad*.

In the twentieth century scholars have attempted to draw conclusions based on Hittite and Egyptian texts that date to the time of the Trojan War. While they give a general description of the political situation in the region at the time, their information on whether this particular conflict took place is limited. Andrew Dalby notes that while the Trojan War most likely did take place in some form and is therefore grounded in history, its true nature is and will be unknown. Hittite archives, like the letter mention of a kingdom of *Ahhiyawa* (Achaea, or Greece) that lies beyond the sea (that would be the Aegean) and controls Milliwanda, which is identified with Miletus. Also mentioned in this and other letters is the Assuwa confederation made of 22 cities and countries which included the city of *Wilusa* (Ilios or Ilium). The letter implies this city lies on the north of the Assuwa confederation, beyond the Seha river. While the identification of Wilusa with Ilium (that is, Troy) is always controversial, in the 1990s it gained majority acceptance. In the Alaksandu treaty (ca. 1280 BC) the king of the city is named Alaksandu, and Paris's name in the *Iliad* (among other works) is Alexander. The letter (dated ca. 1250 BC) which is addressed to the king of Ahhiyawa actually says:

Now as we have come to an agreement on Wilusa over which we went to war...

Formerly under the Hittites, the Assuwa confederation defected after the Kadesh between Egypt and the Hittites (ca. 1274 BC). In 1230 BC Hittite king IV (ca. 1240–1210 BC) campaigned against this federation. Under III (ca. 1210–1205 BC) the Hittites were forced to abandon the lands they controlled in the coast of the Aegean. It is possible that the Trojan War was a conflict between the king of Ahhiyawa and the Assuwa confederation. This view has been supported in that the entire war includes the landing in Mysia (and Telephus'

wounding), Achilles's campaigns in the North Aegean and Telamonian Ajax's campaigns in Thrace and Phrygia. Most of these regions were part of Assuwa. It has also been noted that there is great similarity between the names of the Sea Peoples, which at that time were raiding Egypt, as they are listed by Ramesses III and Merneptah, and of the allies of the Trojans.

That most Achaean heroes did not return to their homes and founded colonies elsewhere was interpreted by Thucydides as being due to their long absence. Nowadays the interpretation followed by most scholars is that the Achaean leaders driven out of their lands by the turmoil at the end of the Mycenaean era preferred to claim descent from exiles of the Trojan War.

The ancient Greek mankind, trying to explain certain metaphysical phenomena and anxieties, invented amazing myths concerning the Cosmogony (the creation of the World) and the Theogony (the birth of the Gods). Thus, the ancient Greek people created their own splendid, yet human-like world of gods, justifying the various abstract significances like Love, Birth or Death.

The origins of the gods of ancient Greek religion are described in the *Theogony*, the famous poem which was composed by the Greek writer Hesiod around 700 BC, and the Library of Apollodorus.

The creation of the gods needs to be divided into four parts:

First there was Chaos, a rough unordered mass of things, also considered as a void. Chaos was followed by Gaea (Earth) and Eros (Desire), who came to cancel every logical thought or act. Gaea then brought Uranus (the Heaven), the infinite Pontus (the Sea) with his raging waves and high mountains full of forests to the world.

The Castration of Uranus

Uranus' task was to surround and cover Gaea with his starry coat, however, it very soon came to a union between Uranus and Gaea and they became the first divine couple in the world. Gaea bore Uranus twelve Titans: the deep Oceanus, Coeus, Crius, Hyperion, Iapetus, Theia, Rhea, Themis, Mnemosyne, the golden-wreathed Phoebe the charming Tethys, and Cronus, who was the youngest of all. Furthermore, she produced three one-eyed creatures called Cyclopes (Brontes, Steropes and heady Arges), as well as three hundred-handed creatures called Hecatonchires.

Uranus was fearful of his children overthrowing him, so he pushed his children back one by one into the womb of Gaea. His wife Gaea was in deep

grief and sorrow over the loss of her own children, so in the end she decided to hand a sickle to her son Cronus, the youngest of the Titans, in order to castrate his father. Cronus castrated his father while he was sleeping; the blood from Uranus was collected by Mother Earth Gaea and she produced Erinyes (Furies), Giants and Nymphs. Cronus then threw his father's genitals into the sea, around which foams developed, that started in the island of Kythera and then slowly made their way to the island of Paphos, in modern Cyprus. In Paphos, the foams transformed into Aphrodite, the Olympian goddess of Love and Beauty.



The Castration of Uranus by Cronus, as interpreted by the Italian historian Giorgio Vasari

The Great Escape of Zeus from the Threat of Cronus

Soon afterwards, Cronus rescued his brothers and sisters and shared the World (the Cosmos) with them. Then, Cronus married his sister Rhea and together they created children who would later on become the Olympian gods. However, Cronus became fearful as well so he started to swallow his own children, just like his father. Rhea was highly discomforted, so, in her attempt to save her youngest child, Zeus, she tricked her husband by giving a huge stone to swallow. Rhea then sent Zeus to the Greek island of Crete in order to protect him.

Zeus grew up in the island of Crete. He was fed by the goat Amaltheia and the Nymphs took good care of him. Doves brought him ambrosia from far away to eat and an eagle brought him nectar to drink. When he reached manhood, as prophesied, Zeus rescued his five elder brothers and sisters and then started a war against his father and the Titans. This war is also known as also known as the "Titanomachy".

In this battle, Zeus succeeded in overthrowing Cronus, casting him and the other Titans into the depths of the Underworld. A huge battle with the Giants followed, where the Olympian Gods excelled... and then time had come for the Olympian gods to rule the world!

Aphrodite

Aphrodite was created from the foam of the crystal waters of Paphos in the fragrant island of Cyprus, when the Titan Cronos slew his father, the major Titan Ouranos, and threw then his genitals into the sea. Aphrodite was married to the lame smith **Hephaestus**, the Olympian God of the Iron, but her heart was devoted to **Ares**, the God of War, with whom Aphrodite was having a passionate, but secret love affair.

According to a myth, Aphrodite gave birth to **Eros**, the winged cupid of love and was often accompanied by him. Other children of Aphrodite were **Himeros** (desire), **Pothos** (desire), Phobos (fear), **Deimos** (terror), **Armonia** (Harmony) and the Nymph **Rhode**.

Aphrodite was the most attractive goddess of Mount Olympus. She was the goddess of Love, Beauty and Eternal Youth, arousing desire to gods and humans as well as birds and beasts. In addition, she was connected to the death/rebirth of nature and human beings.

Aphrodite may have been the most attractive goddess, but according to the Iliad (the famous poem by Homer), she was a rather weak, frightful goddess.

Aphrodite was a highly attractive young woman who dressed elegantly and loved to wear jewellery. Her eyelashes were curled and she had a constant smile on her lovely face. Aphrodite had a tender neck and symbolized the feminine beauty. Aphrodite's symbols were the **girdle** (which she was using to compel love), the **seashell** and the **mirror**. Her sacred animal was the **dove**. Aphrodite means "arisen from the foam" in ancient Greek. The Roman name of Aphrodite is "**Venus**".

Titles of Aphrodite are Anadyomene ("arising"), Cypria ("from Cyprus"), Cytherea ("from the Greek island of Cythera"), Genetyllis ("capable of reproduction"), Kallipygos ("of the beautiful buttocks"), Nomios ("of the flocks"), Urania ("heavenly"). If you want to worship the goddess, then here are the places of worship related to Aphrodite :- Daphni/ Eleusis, Island of Kythira, Island of Milos, Temple of Aphrodite in Delos, Greece, Temple of Aphrodite in Paphos, Cyprus.



Apollo

Apollo was born by **Zeus**, the King of the Gods, and the Titaness **Leto** on the Greek island of **Delos**. Apollo had an older twin sister, the Greek goddess of the hunt **Artemis**. The better halves are The Nymphs like **Cyrene** and **Daphne** and the mortal **Coronis**.

Children of The Great Apollo are **Asclepius** (the god of Healing), the legendary musician **Orpheus** and the heroes **Troilus** and **Aristaeus**.

Apollo was the Greek Sun god of the Music. He invented the lute (a plucked string instrument with a body shaped like a pear), but he was more popular for playing the lyre, which was invented by Hermes, the messenger of the gods. Apollo excelled in important music contests, competing against Greek god Hermes and the Satyr Pan as well as other deities. In addition, Apollo owned the precious gift of prophecy, given to him by his father Zeus in his infancy. He was the patron of the ancient city of Delphi, where the first oracle of Ancient Greece was located. The district was considered to be the **Navel of the World** (the Omphalos) in Ancient times. Apollo was a handsome, strong and youthful god with impressive golden hair. Apollo's symbols were the **lyre**, the **tripod**, the **laurel tree** and the **navel stone**. His plants were the **myrtle** and the **laurel**. Apollo's sacred animals were the **wolf**, the **raven** and the **lizard**.

Titles of Apollo are Alexikakos ("keeping away the bad"), Asimodoxaros ("Silver-Bowed"), Citharoedus ("holding a cithara/lyre"), Epikourios ("helping"),



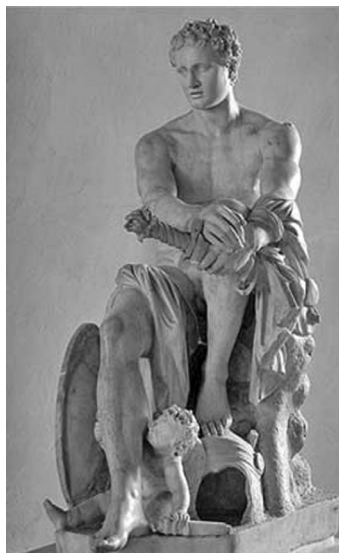
Hylates (“god of the forest”), Lyceus (“guide of the wolves”), Makrosagitaris (“hitting the target from afar”), Musagetes (“leader of the Muses”), Nomios (“bucolic”), Patroos (“from the fathers”), Phoebos (“bright”), Pythios (“killer of the Python”). Places of Worship related to Apollo are :- Portara, Naxos, Temple of Apollo Epikourios in Bassae, Messenia, The Temple of Apollo Delphinus in **Aegina, Greece**, Temple of Apollo Delphinus in **Delphi, Greece**, Temple of Apollo in **Ancient Corinth, Greece** Temple of Apollo Patroos in **Ancient Athens, Greece**.

Ares

Ares was a son of **Zeus**, the King of the Gods, and **Hera**, the goddess of marriage.

His Siblings are **Eilithyia**, the goddess of childbirth, **Hebe**, the goddess of youth and **Hephaestus**, the Olympian god of Metallurgy. Ares’ secret mistress was **Aphrodite**, the goddess of Love and Beauty. Among Ares’ children with Aphrodite were **Himeros** (desire), **Pothos** (desire), **Phobos** (fear), **Deimos** (terror), **Armonia** (harmony), **Eros** (love) and **Anteros** (mutual love). Ares also had one daughter with Aglaurus called **Alcippe**, who was raped by Allirothios, a son of Poseidon.

Just like his mother Hera, Ares had a very difficult character to deal with and was therefore rather unpopular among the other deities and mankind. For this reason, no Greek city wanted to have him as its patron. He often had conflicts and fights with his half-sisters Artemis and Athena, especially during the Trojan War. Ares had his residence up on Mount Olympus and his throne was upholstered with human skin. Usually he was accompanied by Eris, the goddess of discord. Ares was a simple warrior with swift feet. Usually he was riding a chariot, wearing a helmet on his head. In his hands he was holding a shield, a sword or a spear. The symbol of Ares was the spear and his sacred animal was the dog. The Roman name of Ares is “**Mars**”.



Place of Worship related to Ares is in Boeotia and Thrace, the homeland of Ares

Artemis

Artemis was born as a daughter of **Zeus**, the Ruler of the Greek gods and the Titaness **Leto** on Mount Cynthus at the island of Delos in Greece. Artemis had a twin brother, **Apollo**. Apollo was the god of the Sun, whereas Artemis' cult was connected to the Moon. Artemis was born before Apollo and helped her mother give birth to her little brother. Goddess Artemis never married.

As a child, Artemis had asked from her father Zeus to remain an eternal virgin and therefore became one of the three Virgin Goddesses in Greek mythology. Artemis had absolute sovereignty over nature and was said to bring fertility to all places that worshipped her. Usually accompanied by Nymphs and Oceanids, Artemis loved to hunt with arrows dipped in poison. Artemis was usually armed with bow and arrows and was wearing a knee-high chiton (a sort of tunic). The symbols of Artemis were the **bow** and the **pike**. Her tree was the **cedar** and her sacred animals were the **snake**, the **bear** and the **deer**. The Roman name of Artemis is "Diana".



Titles of Artemis are Agrotera (“the huntress”), Ariste (“perfect”), Calliste (“fairest”), Caryatis (“of the walnut tree”), Cynthia (“of Mount Cynthus in Delos, Greece”), Daphnia (“of the laurel tree”), Ephesian (“from Ephesus”), Hymnia (“of the songs/hymns”), Kourotrophos (“upbringer of young children”), Kynigētis (“huntress”), Limnatis (resting beneath the lakes), Lochia (“patron of pregnant women”), Potnia theron (“lover/mistress of the animals”)

Places of Worship related to Artemis are Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, Turkey. Temple of Artemis in Brauron, Greece. Temple of Orthia Artemis, Sparta.

Athena

Goddess Athena was a daughter of **Zeus**, the King of the Gods, and **Metis**, the first wife of Zeus, who was keeping inside herself the entire world’s wisdom. Athena never married and had no children. Athena was the goddess who taught mankind various skills such as weaving and sewing to the women and agriculture and metallurgy to men. She was always giving precious advice and stood by on any danger. Athena protected the heroes as they went out to war and saved them on their coming back.



After competing against the Greek god Poseidon, Athena officially became the patron deity of the city of ancient Athens and the Parthenon was built in her honour. She was known as “Athena Nike” (Athena the victorious), as she was believed to have given the Athenians the victory during the Persian War. A tall, slim woman with bluish-green eyes trickling light, wearing a suit of armour and a golden helmet. Athena’s symbols were the **spear**, the **distaff** and the **aegis** (a shield of goatskin), to which the head of the Gorgon Medusa was fastened in order to terrify the opponents). Athena’s tree was the **olive tree**

and her sacred animal was the **owl**, the symbol of wisdom. The Roman name of Athena is "**Minerva**".

Titles of Athena are Anemotis ("protector of the winds"), Areia ("war-like"), Damasippos ("teaching how to train horses"), Ergane ("goddess of skills and crafts"), Glaukopsis ("green-eyed"), Hippias ("guide of the horses"), Nike ("bringer of victory"), Pallas ("youthful"), Polios ("defender/guardian of the city"), Promachos ("leader of the battle"), Soteira ("saviour").

Places of Worship related to Athena are :- Temple of Aphaia in Aegina, Greece. The Parthenon on the Acropolis in Ancient Athens, Greece. Temple of Athena Nike in Ancient Athens, Greece

Demeter

Demeter was a child of the Titans **Cronus** and **Rhea**.

Demeter had five siblings. Three brothers (**Zeus**, **Poseidon** and **Hades**), and two sisters (**Hestia** and **Hera**). **Persephone**, the goddess of the Underworld is Demeter's daughter who was later prisoned by **Hades**. Demeter was a peace-loving deity and the source of all growth and life; she was the goddess who provided all nutrition on the earth and taught mortals how to cultivate the earth and ease life. Demeter was most appreciated for introducing wheat to mankind, making man different from animals. Demeter was a rich-haired woman with golden tresses and slender feet. She was usually wearing a dark cloak and was holding a golden sword in her hands. The symbols of Demeter were the **ear of wheat** and the **grains**, as well as the crocus flower, the narcissus, the myrtle and the daffodil. The Roman name of Demeter is "**Ceres**". Titles of Demeter are Aloas ("threshing"), Chloe ("green"). Places of Worship related to Demeter are Temple of Demeter in Selinunte, Sicily. Temple of Demeter in the island of Naxos Temple of Demeter in Eleusis, Greece.

Dionysus

Dionysus was a son of **Zeus**, the King of the Gods and the beautiful princess **Semele**. Because of his mortal mother, his birthplace **Thebes** refused to acknowledge him as an immortal at first. He had Relationships with **Aphrodite**, the goddess of love, and **Nyx**, the goddess of the night. His wife is **Ariadne**, the princess of Crete. Among the children are **Priapus**, **Phthonus** and **Deianira**.

Dionysus was a god known for his lightheartness and always offered his help to anyone in need. He was therefore very popular among gods and mortals and many festivals were being held every year in his honor. Nevertheless,

Dionysus was many times misunderstood. Dionysus was one of the Olympian gods who actually did not live in Mount Olympus but was constantly travelling around the world together with Satyrs and Maenads in order to discover the secrets of winemaking. The origin of Dionysus' name remains an unsolved puzzle until today. According to the poet Pindar, it probably derives from the words "Zeus", the father of Dionysus, and "Nysa", the mountain on which Dionysus was born and raised. Dionysus was a handsome young man with impressive hair (usually tresses falling below his shoulders) and a wreath of ivy on his head. In his hand he was holding a "thyrsos", which was a light staff wrapped with leaves of ivy and a pine cone on its top. The symbols of Dionysus were the **thyrsos** (a wooden stick wrapped with ivy leaves and vines), the **flute** and the **wine barrels**. His sacred animals were the **panther** and the **tiger**. The Roman name of Dionysus is "**Bacchus**".

Titles of Dionysus are Agrionius ("fierce"), Aigobolos ("Goatslayer"), Bacchus Bromios ("noisy"), Charidotes ("giver of charm"), Philoinos ("Wine-Lover"), Philomousos ("Lover of the Muses"), Zoophoros ("Bringer of Life"). Places of worship of Dionysus are in Ikaria, the birthplace of Dionysus and Theater of Dionysus in Ancient Athens, Greece.

Hades

Hades was a child of the Titans **Cronus** and **Rhea**. Hades had five siblings. Two younger brothers (**Zeus**, **Poseidon**), and three sisters (**Hestia**, **Hera** and **Demeter**). **Persephone** is his wife whom he abducted from his sister Demeter and took with him down to the Underworld. Hades was the Greek god of the Dead and, according to Plato, he should be considered as one of the Olympian gods. Hades was the supreme ruler of the Underworld. Almost never did he leave his gloomy kingdom but was residing there instead, surrounded by darkness and silence... Hades' helper was Charos, the angel of dead. Charos had the duty to transfer the souls of the dead with a boat over the River Acheron from the world of the living to the world of the dead. Furthermore, Hades had a dog with three heads which was named Cerberus. Hades had gloomy features. He had a beard and dark hair falling over his brow. The sacred symbol of Hades was his **helmet**, which helped him stay invisible. His sacred animal was **Cerberus**, his own three-headed dog.



After the defeat of Titans, Hades was cheated by Zeus and Poseidon who expelled him from Olympus to The Dark World of dead.

Titles of Hades are Adamastos (“untamed”), Eubulos (“giving good advice (euphemistically), Ithimos (“mighty”), Polydectes (“acceptor of many”), Zagreus. Places of Worship related to Hades are on the bank of River Styx.

Hephaestus

Hephaestus was a son of **Zeus**, the King of the Gods, and **Hera**, the goddess of marriage, although it was considered by some that he was conceived prenuptially. He had siblings like **Eilithyia**, the goddess of childbirth, **Hebe**, the goddess of youth and **Ares**, the Olympian god of War. His wife is **Aphrodite**, the goddess of love.



Hephaestus was a very kind and loveable god, but was the only deity who was physically ugly and lame. When his mother Hera saw him for the first time, she was so frustrated that she took her son and threw him from Mount Olympus to the depths of the seas, causing a deformation to his leg. Hephaestus was finally rescued by two Nereids, Thetis and Eurynome, who raised him for nine years inside a cave, far away and hidden from his cruel mother. Hephaestus had his working lay beneath the crater of the volcano of Aetna in Italy. There, he was working together closely with the one-eyed Cyclopes to create strong thunderbolts for his master Zeus. Hephaestus was also famous for having created the first woman of the ancient world, Pandora. Usually, Hephaestus is depicted wearing a short tunic which was typical for craftsmen, and holding a double ax or blacksmith's pincers. Because of his disability Hephaestus leaned on a walking stick. The symbols of Hephaestus were the **fire**, the **axe**, the **pincers** and the **hammer**. Title of Hephaestus is Polytechnes (of many arts/skills). Temple of Hephaestus is in Ancient Athens, Greece.

Hera

Hera was a child of the Titans **Cronus** and **Rhea**. Hera had five siblings. Three brothers (**Poseidon**, **Hades** and **Zeus**) and two sisters (**Hestia** and **Demeter**).

Zeus, the King of the Gods married her and had children like **Eilithyia**, the goddess of childbirth, **Ares**, the Olympian god of war, **Hebe**, the goddess of youth and **Hephaestus**, the Olympian god of Metallurgy. According to some beliefs, Hephaestus was born without the intervention of Zeus. Although Hera was one of the fairest goddesses in Mount Olympus, Zeus was giving Hera plenty of reason to be suspicious and jealous; Hera therefore used to stay in high places in order to keep an eye on her husband's doings. There were times she would also interfering, causing harm to Zeus' mistresses, since Zeus himself was invincible.

Hera was a beautiful, mature woman with big eyes and pierced lobes. She always took care of her appearance, dressing elegantly and decently in a feminine, but not exotic fashion.. However, Hera was not really a desirable woman, despite her beauty. For this reason, Aphrodite had to loan Hera her famous girdle to help her seduce her husband Zeus. Hera's symbols were the **diadem**, the **scepter** and the **pomegranate**, a symbol of fertility. Her flower was the **lily** and her sacred animals were the **peacock** and the **cow**.



Titles of Hera are Boopis (cow-eyed), Gamelia (patroness of marriage), Leukolenos (white-armed), Teleia (perfect). Places of Worship related to Hera exist at Temple of Hera in Samos, The Temple of Hera Lacinia in Agrigento, Sicily, and Sanctuary of Hera in Argos, Greece.

Hermes

Hermes was the son of **Zeus**, the King of the Gods, and the mountain Nymph **Maea**, who was a daughter of the Titan Atlas. Hermes was born inside a cave on **Mount Cyllene** in Arcadia, southern Greece. His famous children are **Hermaphroditus** and the Satyr **Pan**.

Hermes was wearing wings on his sandals and therefore was the speediest of all Greek gods. Because of his speed, Hermes received the role of the messenger and conductor of souls to the Underworld. Hermes was the only Olympian god who was authorized to visit Heaven, Earth and also the Underworld and enjoyed this way popularity among all the Greek gods and spirits. It is well known that Ancient Greeks endowed their gods with human weaknesses. Hermes, for instance, felt an irresistible impulse of stealing ever since his infancy and quickly developed as the god of the cheaters and the thieves.



Hermes was a messenger of all gods, but mostly he was known for performing duties for his father Zeus with great pleasure. Zeus appreciated Hermes' wits highly and always asked for Hermes' assistance throughout his decisions, especially when it came to cheating on his wife Hera. Hermes was a young man, wearing traveling clothes, a flat hat known as "petasus" and winged sandals on his feet. Oftentimes he was also considered to have wings attached to his shoulders and hat. Hermes usually held a winged staff with snakes wrapped around it in his hands in order to gain access everywhere. This staff helped Hermes to charm the gods or to wake up those who were tamed by the god of sleep. The caduceus (his staff), the purse (or leather pouch), the winged sandals, the ram and the petasus (his hat) are the symbols of Hermes. The Roman name of Hermes is "**Mercury**".

Titles of Hermes are Agoraios (commercial), Argeiphontes (Argus-slayer), Enagonios (guide of the athletics), Eriounios (luck bringer), and Psychopompos (guide to the Underworld). You can worship Hermes at Mount Cilene in Arcadia, the birthplace of Hermes.

Hestia

Hestia was the eldest daughter of the Titans **Cronus** and **Rhea**.

Hestia had five siblings. Three brothers (**Zeus**, **Hades** and **Poseidon**), and two sisters (**Hera** and **Demeter**). Goddess Hestia never married. Hestia

was one of the three virgin goddesses, next to Athena and Artemis. Both Poseidon and Apollo wished to marry her, however Hestia had given the oath to Zeus to never enter into a union with a male and to remain forever pure and undefiled. Hestia personified the fire that was burning in the hearth of every home. All families poured sweet wine in her name and dedicated her the richest portion. The hearth fire was not allowed to go out by any family unless it was ritually extinguished. Hestia may not have had a public cult, but she was always worshipped in any temple, regardless of the god the temple was dedicated to.



Hestia was a kind, forgiving goddess and had a discrete character. She never left her residence, the sacred mountain of Olympus and never participated in any disputes or wars. For this reason, all Olympian gods respected and loved her. Goddess Hestia was depicted as a bashful woman, usually seated. Title of Hestia is Presveira (oldest).

Poseidon

Poseidon was a child of the Titans **Cronus** and **Rhea**. Poseidon had five siblings. Two brothers (**Zeus** and **Hades**) and three sisters (**Hestia**, **Hera** and **Demeter**). The sea-goddess **Amphitrite** is his wife.. However, according to a tradition, Poseidon was married more than once. He had children like **Triton**, **Agnor**, the Nymphs **Rhode** and **Benthesicyme** and the twin giants **Otus** and **Ephialtes**.



Poseidon was considered to be the bad-tempered, moody and greedy god among the Olympians. Once insulted, he would revenge himself, like he did in the case of Odysseus, who brutally blinded his son, the Cyclops Polyphemus. Poseidon loved to cross the oceans and seas with his golden chariot surrounded by dolphins. Poseidon was the Greek god responsible for natural and supernatural events; mainly the ones associated to the sea world and was the savior of ships. He possessed a trident which was so powerful that it could shake the earth. Poseidon was able to cause tempests and earthquakes, drown lands, shatter rocks and had the ability to finally bring back peacefulness. Poseidon possessed two palaces, the one was up in Mount Olympus and the other was located in the depths of the seas and was bejeweled with gold and precious gems. Usually Poseidon preferred to stay with his wife Amphitrite beneath the ocean. Poseidon was imposing and strong with long, blue hair.

The symbol of Poseidon was the **trident** and his sacred animals were the **dolphin** and the **horse**. According to a tradition, he was the one who breathed life into the first horse on earth. The Roman name of Poseidon is "**Neptune**". Titles of Poseidon are Delphinus (associated to the dolphins), Hippius (guide of the horses), Kosmosistis (shaking the earth), Pelagios (patron of the open seas), Seisichthon (moving the earth and causing earthquakes). Temples of Poseidon are at Sounion in **Ancient Athens, Greece** and Island of Poros.

Zeus

Zeus was the last child of the Titans **Cronus** and **Rhea**. Zeus had five older siblings. Two brothers (**Poseidon, Hades**), and three sisters (**Hestia, Hera**,

Demeter). Zeus married his own sister **Hera**, the goddess of marriage and monogamy, but was giving her plenty of reasons to be jealous, since Zeus was renowned of his numerous love affairs. As a result, Zeus fathered plenty of children like Apollo, Ares, Heracles, and Persius alongwith many more deities mentioned before.



Zeus had his golden throne on the highest summit of Mount Olympus and was respected and awed by all Gods and mortals. All the kings boasted that they descended from Zeus.

Zeus was the “Lord of Justice”, punishing anyone who lied or broke an oath, but was fair and always striving to keep a balance of all things. Furthermore, Zeus was responsible for the weather and was shaping it according to his temper. When in high spirits, Zeus was blessing the world with fine weather; in case of bad mood, however, he would throw rain, winds, lightnings and thunderbolts to cause disaster to the mortals. But even Zeus’ powers had their limits, for, however powerful as he was, he had neither the right nor the ability to intervene in the decisions of the Fates.

Zeus was carefree and loved to laugh out loud. He possessed the perfect knowledge and was just, merciful and prudent. However, he was rather unpredictable, since no one could guess the decisions he would make. Zeus was strong and imposing, with long, oftentimes curly hair. The symbols of Zeus

were the **scepter**, the **throne** and the **thunderbolt**, which was as a gift from the Cyclopes because he liberated them. Zeus' tree was the **oak tree** and his sacred animal was the **eagle**. The Roman name of Zeus is "**Jupiter**".

Titles of Zeus are Aighiochos ("lord of thunderstorms"), Basileus ("king"), Erkios ("defender of the house"), Genethlios ("creator of life"), Georgos ("farmer"), Hypsistos ("highest"), Milosios ("the protector of sheep"), Orkios ("patron of the oath"), Philios ("guard of friendship"), Polieus ("patron of the city ("polis"), Promachos ("leader of the battle"), Soter ("saviour"), Uranios ("heavenly"), Urios ("master of the winds"), Xenios ("hospitable"). Places of Worship related to Zeus are Temple of Zeus in Ancient Olympia, Greece. Temple of Olympian Zeus in Ancient Athens, Greece and Temple of Ellanios Zeus in Aegina, Greece.

Nereus

Nereus was a marine deity in Ancient Greece and the eldest son of Pontus and the Mother Earth Gaea. He was a gentle, well-intentioned old man who was just and would tell nothing but the truth. Furthermore, he was able to transform himself and predict the future. **According to the legend, Nereus foretold the fall of Troy to Paris.**

Nereus lived at the bottom of the Aegean Sea, in a splendid palace built inside a cave. He married Doris, a fine-haired daughter of Oceanus, the Titan of the seas. The couple was blessed with 50 beautiful mermaids, the Nereids, who protected the sailors with their sweet, enchanting sound. One of the mermaids was Amphitrite, the future wife of Poseidon. Nereus first had the tail of a fish and the torso of a man but gradually he became fully human. Nereus had a sweet expression, was bearded and had hair as white as the foams of the sea.

Proteus

Proteus was a respected marine deity, probably from Egypt. He was a son of Poseidon, the Olympian god of the Sea, and acted also as his servant. Proteus knew every single sea in detail and could transform to any animal or dragon he wanted. Proteus lived in the depths of the ocean. He loved to sleep in the shade of the rocks beneath the beach and next to his beloved sea animals. His favorite animals were the seals. Once, Poseidon asked from his son Proteus to guard the sea animals. To return the favor, Poseidon blessed Proteus with the gift of prophecy. However, Proteus almost never revealed the truth about

the future to anybody unless someone was able to capture him, ideally during his sleep. According to the Greek writer Homer, Proteus was an old man with a bandit hat.

Sirens

The Sirens were special Sea Nymphs who were living in an isolated island, the island of the Faiakes. They had the body of a bird, but their head was human-like. The Sirens had the gift of singing in a very seductive manner. Each sailor who was passing by this island got enchanted by their voice and was condemned to stay in their island forever and die. All over the island of the Faiakes there were bones of sailors who weren't able to resist the Sirens' divine melody.



The Sirens are mostly mentioned by Greek poet Homer in his Epos "*Odyssey*", where the Sirens encounter Odysseus and his companions on their journey back to the island of Ithaca. The Sirens were expecting Odysseus' arrival and immediately started singing- but Odysseus was prepared for the situation, so he told his companions to put wax in their ears and bind him strongly in the boat's mast and to not obey to his beggings to free him. This way, Greek hero Odysseus was able to escape from the temptation and continue his long journey to Ithaca.

Triton

Triton was the son of Poseidon, the Greek god of the Oceans and his wife Amphitrite. He lived with his parents in the depths of the seas and served as a messenger for Poseidon. Triton was a sea god with the shape of a merman, having the head and trunk of a human and the tail of a fish. Triton was often depicted with a horn in his hands or blowing a conch shell. Triton had enormous power that could move whole lands and calm seas. He even took part in the Olympian Gods's battle with the Giants and contributed in chasing the Giants away. Furthermore, like Proteus and Nereus, Triton additionally possessed the gift of prophecy.

The Amazons

The Amazons received their name from the fact that they voluntarily removed their right breast in order to easily draw the bow and fight, leaving only the left breast to feed their children. During their fights, they were carrying half-moon shields and wielding spears and were usually wearing a chiton that left one shoulder bare for activity.

Periodically, the Amazons mated with men from another tribe to produce children, but were in the end only keeping their female children, disregarding or mutilating any male ones. The Amazons were a horde of passionate, skillful maiden warriors from the Black Sea. They supposedly descended from Ares, the god of War and the Naiad Harmony.

Famous Amazons in Greek Mythology are Antiope, The wife of Theseus and Penthesile, The fatal love of Achilles.

Cabeiri

The Cabeiri were children of Hephaestus, the god of fire and Cabeiris, a granddaughter of the sun god Apollo. There were male and female Cabeiri in Greek Mythology. The Cabeiri were evil demons of fire who shook the earth and expelled fire from the depths of the earth and the sea. The Cabeiri were the protectors of sailors, the solvers of calamities and the demons who punished perjury and profanity. Earthquakes and fires were attributed to them. The Greek island of Lemnos honored the Cabeiri as gods and portrayed them like pygmies who had a pronounced belly and crooked legs. Modern scholars believe that the name Cabeiri comes from the Semitic "kavir", which means "great".

Graces

The Graces were daughters of Zeus, the King of the gods, and the Oceanid Eurynome. There were three Graces in Greek Mythology: **Aglaia**, the Grace that symbolized Beauty, **Euphrosyne**, the Grace of Delight and **Thalia**, the Grace of Blossom. According to Greek poet Pindar, these enchanting goddesses were created to fill the world with pleasant moments and goodwill. Usually the Graces were attending the Greek goddess of Beauty Aphrodite and her companion Eros and loved dancing around in a circle to Apollo's divine music, together with the Nymphs and the Muses.

Furies

The Erinyes (also known as Furies) were cruel earth goddesses who symbolized the divine vengeance. The Erinyes were three sisters in Greek mythology: Alecto (the angry), Megaera (the grudging) and Tisiphone (the avenger). The Furies were created from the blood of the Titan Uranus, when his son Cronus castrated him to take revenge on the loss of his siblings.

According to another legend, the Furies were the daughters of Nyx, who was the symbolization of the night and a daughter of Chaos. The Erinyes were persecuting crimes such as disrespect, injustice, perjury or arrogance and first and foremost- murder, especially the murder inside a family. Their lust of punishment knew no bounds, for they kept punishing a sinner even after his death, until he finally would show remorse. The Erinyes were dreadful creatures with appalling features. They had a burning breath and poisonous blood was dripping from their eyes. Their heads were wreathed with serpents.

Fates

The Fates were among the eldest goddesses in ancient Greek mythology. The Fates were either daughters of Zeus, the Lord of the gods, and Themis, the goddess of justice, or were created by goddess Nyx without the intervention of man. There were three Fates in Greek mythology: *Clotho*, *Lachesis*, and *Atropos*. Clotho, the spinner, was the youngest of the three Fates; she spun the thread of destiny with a distaff, determining the time of birth of an individual; Lachesis measured the thread length to determine the length of life; finally, cruel Atropos cut the thread of life, determining this way the time of death.

The Fates (Moirae) were the spinners of the thread of life, determining the span of human life of every mortal from birth to death. No other god had the

right or the means to alter their decisions. The Fates were the personifications of destiny; nevertheless, no human could blame the fates, since there were times he was the only one responsible for his failures.

Muses

The Muses were nine very intelligent, beautiful and careless divinities. Each Muse was responsible for a different literary or poetic genre. They were created by Zeus, the King of the Gods, who secretly lay for nine nights with Mnemosyne, the Titaness of memory.



The Muses were brought to life to make the world disremember the evil and relieve the sorrows and to praise the gods, and especially the Olympian Gods' victory over their ancestors, the Titans. Apollo was the main teacher of the Muses. They were usually accompanying him and the Graces on their strolls and loved singing and dancing on soft feet on laurel leaves, while Apollo was playing the lyre. Home of the Muses was Mount Helicon in Central Greece, a mountain that was sacred to the Greek god Apollo, the Greek god of the music, the light and the sun. Their most significant sanctuary was in Pieria, close to Mount Olympus. For this reason, they were often called Pierides. It were the Muses who unveiled the Greek shepherd Hesiod the origins and genealogies of the ancient Greek gods and then blessed and inspired him

to write his famous epic poem, the Theogony. The Muses may have had Mnemosyne, the goddess of Memory, as their mother-however, their mission was to make people actually forget their sorrows and don't think about their cares.

Nymphs

The Nymphs were the daughters of Zeus, the King of the gods. They ranged over beautiful groves and dwelled near springs, in mountains through which rivers flowed and in woods. There were **Celestial Nymphs, Sea Nymphs, Land Nymphs, Wood Nymphs and Underworld Nymphs** in Greek mythology. Because of their close connection to water, a fertilizing element, the Nymphs were worshiped as daemons of fertility and vegetation. The nymphs protected the plants and animals and were also playing the role of nurses who occasionally raised human beings. The Nymphs were joining the Greek gods Artemis and Apollo and also Acheloos, the river god, and were playing with them. However, most of all, the Nymphs enjoyed playing with Hermes, the messenger of the gods and Hermes' son, the Satyr Pan.



According to the Odyssey, the ancient Greeks also used the word 'Nymph' to describe a mortal woman who was recently married. Famous Nymphs in Greek Mythology are Callisto, The companion of Artemis. Calypso, The capturer of Odysseus. Daphne, The personification of the laurel tree. Echo,

The Nymph of steady reply. Io, The priestess of Hera in Argos. Pitys, The personification of the pine. Syrinx, the Inspiration for Melody.

Horae

The Horae, literally translated as the “hours”, were the daughters of Zeus, the King of the Gods and Themis, the Titaness of Justice. The Horae were sisters of the Fates. Opinions vary on the number and the names of the Horae. However, according to the Ancient Greeks from Athens, there were three Horae in Greek mythology. One was Thallo, also called Thallate, who was the goddess of spring, buds and blooms. The second one was called Karpo who personified the maturing of the summer. The third one had the name Auxo and was the personification of autumn. They all were living at the river Heridanus, which was located in the center of Athens. The Horae personified the seasons, maintaining the rhythm of the cycle of vegetation. They also were ordered by Zeus to guard Mount Olympus, the Olympian Gods’ home, opening and closing its gates with big, heavy clouds. The Horae were mostly associated with Aphrodite, the goddess of Love. They were the ones who had found and welcomed her in the island of Cyprus, adorned her and then followed her ever since.



Pleiades

According to Apollodorus, the Pleiades were seven sisters created by the Titan Atlas and his mate Pleione, the daughter of the Titan Oceanus. They were goddesses of the mountains and the companions of Artemis. Her names were **Maea, Electra, Taygete, Alcyone, Celaino, Sterope and Merope**. According to a myth, Orion, the son of Poseidon, was pursuing the Pleiades for five whole years. But in the end Zeus, the King of the Gods, took pity on them and transformed the Pleiades into doves, and then into a constellation of seven stars, the famous Pleiades. The brightest stars of the constellation were named after the sisters. However, Orion also transformed into a star ... and it is said that he still continues chasing them across the night sky.

Nearly all of the Pleiades paired with great gods and gave birth to gods and tribal leaders. *Maea*, the eldest and most beautiful Pleiad, mated with Zeus, the king of the gods and gave birth to Hermes, the messenger of the Gods. *Electra* also mated with Zeus and gave birth to Dardanos, the founder of Troy. *Taygete* once saw Zeus in her dreams and after nine months she gave birth to Lacedaemon, founder of Sparta. A Greek mountain was named in her honor. *Celaino* and *Alcyone* both mated with Poseidon, the god of the Seas. Celaino gave birth to Lycos, and Ancestor of the Arcadians, in the islands of the Blessed, somewhere in the Western Ocean. According to a myth, she got hit by thunder. Alcyone was raped by Poseidon and gave birth to three children, one daughter, Aithousa, and two sons, Hyrieus and Hyperenor. *Sterope* mated with Ares, the god of war, and gave birth to Oenomaus, the King of Pisa in Western Greece. Merope, the 'Lost Pleiad', was the only Pleiad who got married to a mortal man called Sisypheus. That's the reason her star was the weakest among the others.

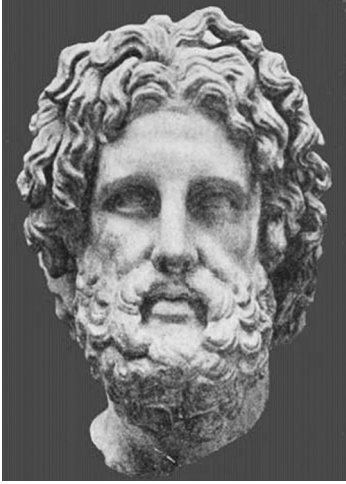
The Winds

The Winds were winged gods with a human form and were created by Astraeus, the god of the stars and Eos, the goddess of the dawn. The most important winds were Zephyrus, Boreas, Notus and Eurus. Other winds were Skiron, Kaikias, Apeliotis and Lips.



Asclepius

Asclepius was the son of the Olympian god Apollo and the beautiful mortal Coronis and one of the youngest gods in Greek Mythology. His wife was Epione, the goddess of soothing, with whom Asclepius gave birth to many children, among them **Hygieia**, the Greek goddess of health. According to the ancient Greek belief, Asclepius was the personification of the ideal physician.



The wise Centaur Chiron helped him acquire a great skill in medicine, alleviating mortals from their pains.

According to the legend, once Athena gave him the blood of Medusa and with this blood Asclepius discovered a way to resurrect people. When Zeus, the King of the gods, found out about the great power of Asclepius, he started worrying that Asclepius would soon be able to rule the world. He therefore threw a thunderbolt at the hero and transformed him into a constellation. The constellation of Asclepius received the name called Ophiuchus ("the serpent carrier").

Adonis

When Adonis was an infant, Aphrodite put him in a chest and gave him to the Greek goddess of the Underworld, Persephone, to be taken care of. Persephone, however, was so much charmed by the extraordinary beauty of Adonis that, when he had reached manhood, she refused to give him back to Aphrodite. In order to judge fairly, Zeus (or, according to another myth, the Muse Calliope) allowed Persephone to keep Adonis in the Underworld for four months every year. Four months Adonis should also spend with Aphrodite and the remaining four months he could stay with whomever his heart longed for. Adonis opted for Aphrodite.



The Adonia were festivals that were held in honor of Adonis to celebrate nature. The celebrations were held all over Greece, usually during springtime. They lasted for two days and only women were allowed to participate. On the first day, the women mourned over the death of Adonis. The god was represented with wax figures which were thrown into the nearby rivers by the end of the day. On the second day, the mourning came to an end and the resurrection of Adonis was celebrated with great joy and wild dances. It is said that the blood-red anemone, commonly known as the poppy, was created by the blood of Adonis, when Aphrodite sprinkled it with nectar in the moment of his death.

Eros

Eros was the Greek symbol of love and desire. He was shooting magic, golden arrows into the hearts of both mortals and immortals, spreading physical desire but also numbness and pain. Eros was said to be born out of **Chaos**; according to another legend, though, Eros was the son of **Ares**, the god of War and **Aphrodite**, the goddess of Beauty, of whom Eros was the steady companion. Eros was a **beautiful** and very cunning small boy with wings.

Eros himself was deeply in love with the Greek goddess Psyche, the goddess who incorporated human emotions. Psyche was renowned for her divine beauty, which was said to be even greater than the beauty of Aphrodite. People from around the world arrived at Psyche's palace to see her up close, brought offerings and scattered flowers on the streets whenever she came out. The Roman name of Eros is "**Cupid**".

Hebe

Hebe was the daughter of Zeus and Hera. However, according to a myth of that time, Hera had been impregnated solely by wild lettuce, while having dinner with the Greek god Apollo. Hebe was the sister of Ares and Hephaestus and Eilythia, the goddess of childbirth. Hebe married Heracles just after he had obtained immortality, and the couple gave birth to two sons, Alexiaris and Anicetus. Through Hebe, Heracles also gained eternal youth, much to the dislike of Hebe's mother, Hera, who was fighting against Heracles constantly. Hebe residence was on Mount Olympus. Usually, she was preparing the chariot of her mother Hera, or taking care of her brother Ares, by dressing him with magnificent clothes, preparing his bath and washing his clothes.

Mainly, however, Hebe acted as a servant to the Olympian Gods, pouring sweet nectar into their glasses, until Ganymede, the lover of Zeus, was

brought to Mount Olympus and replaced the goddess. Hebe was a youthful woman, usually wearing a golden wreath.

Helios

Helios was born from the union of the celestial Titan **Hyperion** and **Theia**, the Titaness of Sight (or Euryphaessa). Helios' sisters were Selene, the goddess of the moon, and Eos, the radiant, rosy-fingered goddess of the dawn. Helios was first married to his sister, Selene, but overall he had many wives, among them the Oceanid Perse; from their union, Helios became the father of king Aeetes, Circe and Pasiphae, the wife of Minos. Helios was a glowing god with bright curls of hair. He had piercing eyes gazing from his golden helmet and wore fine-spun garment. The ancient Greeks interpreted Helios as a gigantic eye with a halo, observing everything his light could touch. Morning by morning, Eos traveled until Mount Olympus to announce her brother's glorious arrival. Soon Helios approached the Olympus, with his winged golden chariot pulled by four horses of fire and the two siblings departed for their daily journey across the sky. While traveling from the land of the dawn to the land of the heavens, Eos gradually transformed into Hemera (Day) and later on to Hespera (evening). Upon arrival, Helios hid himself in his golden cup and night fell upon the earth...this was the moment when his wife Selene, the goddess of the moon, departed for her own, nightly journey.



Another wife of Helios was the Nymph Rhode(meaning “rose” in the Greek language). Rhodes gave her name to the famous Greek island of Rhodes and Helios was the island's patron deity.The Rhodians worshipped Helios very much and organized annual festivities in his honor. One of the island's main attractions, the Colossus of Rhodes, was built in Helios' honor and was one of the seven wonders of the Ancient World. The Colossus of Rhodes was a

bronze, triumphal statue, about 32 meters high, that was constructed by the famous Chares of Lindos. **The Roman name of Helios is “Sol”.**

Hemera

Hemera was a primordial goddess and the female embodiment of daylight. Hemera was created with much love by Erebus, the symbol of Darkness and Nyx, the night, both children of Chaos. Hemera’s sister was Aether, the goddess of the Heaven. Hemera was residing with her mother in Tartarus, in the depths of the Underworld, but the two deities never met each other at home. Shortly after the break of day, Hemera was making a journey from the land of the dawn to the land of the heavens, gradually taking the place of Eos, the goddess of the dawn. Upon arrival, Helios, the sun god, hid himself in his golden cup and night fell upon the earth, and Hemera returned to her home in the Underworld. That was the moment when her mother Nyx would start her nightly journey.

Hyacinthus

Hyacinthus was the son of the Muse Clio and the King of Macedonia Pierus.

He was considered to be the partner of both the Greek god Apollo and Zephyrus, the god of the winds. Those two deities were competing each other who will gain the favor of the handsome young man. One day, Apollo was teaching Hyacinthus how to throw the discus and, on his striving to impress his lover, Apollo threw the discus with all his force. Immediately, Hyacinthus tried to run after the discus, but was unfortunate enough to get struck by it and injure himself severely! Despite Apollo’s effort to save the young man’s life with herbs, in the end the young man passed away. From the blood that was shed, Apollo created a beautiful flower, each petal of which had the letters “AI” inscribed- they were symbolizing Apollo’s painful cry... Hygieia was the goddess of the mental and physical health, the tidiness and the pureness. Hygieia is many times mentioned as the wife or daughter of Asclepius, the Greek god of Healing.

Hypnos

Hypnos (Sleep) was the son of Nyx, the night goddess and Erebus, the god of darkness. God Thanatos (Death) was his brother. Hypnos married Pasithea, the goddess of relaxation and rest, and the couple had three sons called “Oneiroi”, who were the gods of dreams. The Oneiroi lived in a cave on the shores of the

ocean and their names were Morpheus, Phobetor and Phantasos. According to one legend, Hypnos lived on the Greek island of Lemnos, the “Island of Dreams”, which was the home of other mysteries.

According to another legend, he resided in the underworld, the realm of Hades, and never saw the sun.

On several occasions Hera, the wife of Zeus, approached Hypnos and offered him many gifts if he would use his powers on Zeus. Her aim was to lull Zeus so that she could attack his son Heracles and influence the evolution of the Trojan War. But Hypnos usually refused to anger Zeus, possibly because he had already come close to having a thunderbolt hurled at him. One time, Hera swore to give Hypnos one of the younger Graces in marriage, the sweet Pasithea, who was the goddess of relaxation and rest. Hypnos desired Pasithea deeply, so he left together with Hera to find Zeus. Once there, Hera scattered “sweet love and desire” in the heart of Zeus and Hypnos transformed himself into a bird and lulled Zeus, watching him from a pine tree on Mount Ida.

Hypnos was saved by taking refuge with his mother Nyx, whose power Zeus always respected.

Iris

Iris was the personification of the **rainbow**, which the Ancient Greeks believed to be the goddess’s dress. Like the rainbow is a bridge to the sky, Iris was also the mediator between the gods and the humans, revealing the will of the gods to the people. Iris was the daughter of the sea god Thaumas and the Oceanid Electra. She was a granddaughter of Gaea (the goddess of Earth) and the sea god Pontus. She was a sister of the winged Harpies. According to a myth, Iris mated with the Zephyr and created Eros, the winged god of love—although most authors mention her as a virgin in their myths.

Iris was chosen by the gods to carry water from the Styx (the river of the Oaths), to Mount Olympus for the gods to swear by. Since she could move with the speed of the wind, Iris acted also like the **messenger of the gods**. She took the orders of Zeus and the other deities from the “eye of heaven” and, sliding down the curve of the rainbow, she appeared in front of the people in a human form and revealed the orders to them.

Furthermore, Iris was a goddess of the sea and the sky. Iris always wore splendid dresses with bewitching colors. She had gold wings attached to her shoulders and winged sandals on her feet. If her wings were missing in the

artistic representations, she was pictured holding a caduceus, which was also a symbol of hers.

Nemesis

Nemesis was the power that was keeping a balance in the universe. She was applying divine justice upon mortals, remorselessly spreading despair to anyone who committed an act of “hubris” by offending the gods with severe crimes like arrogance and greed.

Nemesis was born out of Nyx, the goddess of the night. According to some myths, Nemesis was not a goddess but rather a moral sense closely associated to the Furies and the Titaness Themis. Nemesis’ most significant sanctuary was at Rhamnous of Attica, a place of worship close to Marathon.

Nyx

Goddess Nyx was a primeval goddess and the symbol of the night. Nyx was immortal because she was sent to earth by the gods. She was the goddess who could tame the gods and the humans. Nyx was born out of Chaos and was the sister of Erebus, who embodied the dark silence and had fifteen dark children, among them sweet Hypnos (the sleep) and Thanatos (the death). Nyx resided in a gloomy house located in Tartarus, in the depths of Hades’ Underworld. Nyx was sharing her residence with her daughter Hemera, the embodiment of the Day, without the two of them ever meeting each other at home. Nyx used to reside in her home all day long, taking care of her dark spirited children. But when the evening set in, Nyx was leaving her home to set off for her nightly journey. On her way she met Hemera, the Day, who was returning home from her daily trip and they were greeting each other peacefully.



Persephone

Persephone was the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, the Greek goddess of vegetation. Because of her purity, Persephone was often defined as “Kore”, meaning the “maid”.

While her mother was the goddess of vegetation, Persephone symbolized the *young vegetation*. When she was abducted by Hades, the king of the dead, she became the queen of the Underworld. Persephone was famous for her white hands.

Selene

Goddess Selene was the daughter of the Titan Hyperion and the Titaness Theia. Selene had two siblings, Eos (Dawn) and Helios (Sun), who illuminated Selene eternally because of their brotherhood. Selene's name derives from the Greek word *selas*, meaning "light".



The ancient Greeks imagined Selene with wings and silver fingers, wearing a half moon as her crown. Usually she is depicted horseback or driving a chariot with winged horses, partly white and partly black, an allegory that only one side of the lunar surface is illuminated by the sunlight. Other times she is portrayed riding a bull or elevated on a horse, a mule, a deer or a goat.

Selene had many amorous adventures according to Greek mythology. Her brilliance had been so great that it caused Zeus to fall in love with her and their union brought Pandia (the goddess of the full-moon), Herse (the goddess of the dew) into life. Selene also united with Helios and brought life to the three Horae (Hours). According to another legend, Selene was seduced by Pan who gave her a flock of white oxen. She also mated with Aeras and gave birth to a daughter with the name Drossos.

The great love of Selene was a beautiful boy, the shepherd Endymion. Selene wanted to see Endymion constantly, so she begged Nyx, the goddess of the Night, to go to Zeus and ask for help. Zeus agreed and brought Endymion into a state of eternal sleep in order to remain young beautiful forever for Selene. Selene visited Endymion daily in a cave of Mount Latmus and from their union fifty daughters were born. Their number probably corresponded to the fifty lunar months of each Olympiad. **The Roman name of Selene is "Luna".**

Styx

Styx was an Oceanid in Greek Mythology and the eldest of the three thousand daughters of the titans Oceanus and Tethys. Styx and her children Zelus(ambition), Nike(victory), Cratos(strength) and Bia(violence) had played a very important role during the battle with the Titans and was therefore specially honored by Zeus to personify the sacred river of the gods. The river of Styx separated the world of the living from the world of the dead. In the waters of the river of Styx the Olympian Gods were giving oaths; should they happen to break an oath, they had to experience a severe penalty: they were forced to drink from the river and had to suffer one year without ambrosia and nectar, the food of the gods; after that time, it was prohibited to the oath-breaker for further nine years to attend the meetings of the other deities.



Tyche

According to the Greek poet Hesiod, Goddess Tyche was a daughter of the Sea Titans Oceanus and Tethys. Goddess Tyche was the personification of Hope, Luck and Wealth. She was a labile, yet virtuous spirit, mediating between gods and mortals and leading human lives. She was therefore extraordinarily worshipped by the ancient Greeks.

The main symbol of goddess Tyche was a huge horn, inside of which she was keeping all wealth and richness; the horn once belonged to Amalthea, the goat who fostered Greek god Zeus during his infancy. Tyche was carrying the horn with her constantly, occasionally turning it upside down to spread all its goods to anyone who would meet her on his way. **The Roman name of Tyche is “Fortuna”.**

Heracles/Hercules

Ever since he was a child, Heracles made it obvious that he was not a common mortal but was in possession of extraordinary strengths and divine gifts. Heracles was born in Thebes, Greece, when Zeus managed to seduce his love, Alcmena, by transforming himself into her husband. The affair of Zeus with Alcmena resulted in the hatred of Hera, the jealous wife of Zeus, and her determination to destroy Heracles in any way possible.



The Choice of Heracles between pleasure and virtue

When he reached manhood, Heracles married Megara, a princess of Thebes and together they had five children. Hera, however, who still hadn't got her revenge, armed Heracles with a destroying anger, which made him kill both his wife and his children. When Heracles realized what he had done, he repentantly referred to the Delphic oracle, asking the Greek god Apollo what needed to be done in order to be forgiven for his faults. Apollo advised him to return to his place of origin in order to serve Eurystheus, the King of Tiryns, close to Mycenae. However, Eurystheus was on the side of Hera and

tried to exterminate the hero. For this purpose he assigned the hero **twelve challenging labors**.

Labors of Heracles are The Lion of Nemea, The Lernaean Hydra, The Ceryneian Hind, The Erymanthian Boar, The Augean Stables, The Stymphalian Birds, The Cretan Bull, The Mares of Diomedes, The Girdle of Hippolyte, The Cattle of Geryon, The Apples of the Hesperides and Cerberus, the dog of the Underworld. Once Heracles, the son of Alcmena, succeeded with his difficult labors, the gods felt that he had completed a huge task. So they gave him Hebe, the daughter of the great Zeus and Hera, as his wife and Heracles moved to snowy Olympus, happy to dwell among immortals, unharmed from calamities and ageless forever.

Jason

Jason was the son of Polymeda, who was an aunt of Odysseus and Aeson, an expelled king of Thessaly, who was unjustly overthrown from his throne by his half brother Pelion. Upon his birth, his parents pretended that Jason had died at birth and secretly gave the child to the wise Centaur Chiron to be protected from the enemies. Jason grew up safely in the Mountains of Pelion, practicing perfectly his body and mind under the guidance of the gentle Centaur.

By the age of twenty, Jason, with the help of goddess Hera, decided to return to his father's kingdom in Iolcus to re-claim his family's throne. On his way, Jason encountered a helpless old woman and offered himself to carry her across a river; the old woman, in fact, was no other than Hera in disguise who was putting Jason's kind soul to a test. While crossing the river, Jason lost his sandal and therefore arrived at Iolcus with only one sandal. When Pelias saw Jason he got very much frightened because once a prophecy had warned him he would lose his life from the "one sandaled". In order to protect himself, Pelias set Jason



an impossible feat: to bring back the Golden Fleece from the divine forest of Ares in Colchis. To accomplish this, Jason needed to pass the Black Sea between Colchis and Thessaly and, once there, to take the Golden Fleece away from its fierce guarding dragon.

The journey would be long and the mission tedious and of great difficulty, so Jason needed to find a strong ship and brave shipmates. Goddess Athena, who was helping the goddess Hera, ordered from the shipwright Argos a fast ship with fifty oars; Athena herself was observing Argos' work. The spectacular ship was named after his builder, "Argo". The comrades that were chosen for the journey took the name *Argonauts*. All of them were volunteers and were exceptionally strong and brave warriors. Among them were the strong Heracles, Theseus, the king of Athens and the musician and poet Orpheus.

While the ship of Argo was sailing along, Jason and the Argonauts went through numerous adventures, but since they always were frank and cooperative, they were given a lot of valuable information for their course and could pass any obstacle they encountered on their way.

When they reached Colchis, they encountered Aetes, the King of Colchis. The king pretended to be friendly at first, although he didn't really want to give up the Golden Fleece. He therefore set Jason an impossible task: to plow the field with two fire-breathing bulls and then to sow the field with the teeth of a dragon, while armed men would be growing like plants.

The feat seemed to be impossible, but Jason was not alone. *Medea*, the daughter of Aetes who possessed magic powers, had fallen in love with



Jason and helped the hero through by giving him a magic stone to throw to the armed men. By doing so, Jason managed to accomplish Aetes' order successfully.

However, Aetes then went back on his word and set his army to attack the Argo at night. Medea, who knew about her father's plan, quickly brought Jason to the grove where the Golden Fleece was

hanging. She sang the dragon to sleep with a lullaby and Jason quickly seized the Golden Fleece and ran back to the ship. Jason and the Argonauts rowed away and Medea followed them. Later on Medea became Jason's wife.

When the ship of Argo returned to Thessaly, Jason found Pelias still unwilling to give up his land. So Medea put a spell to Pelias to sleep and convinced his daughters that her father had died. In order to return to life, they were advised to cut him to pieces and boil- and so they did. Without knowing, they killed their father all by themselves.

Jason and Medea lived happily together for 10 years, when Jason fell in love with *Glauce*, a princess of Corinth. When Medea found out about her husband's affair, she killed all her children and then fled from Thessaly. Jason grew old lonely and in the end he killed himself by falling from the stern of the Argo.

Achilles

Achilles was born in the ancient city of Fthia (presumably the modern Farsala of Thessaly/Central Greece) as the son of Peleus, the King of Fthia, and the silver footed sea goddess Thetis. Achilles was a passionate, generous, brave hero but had also an impulsive and quick-tempered character. Many times he even gave the impression of being arrogant. During the Trojan War, Agamemnon accused Achilles for being a narrow-minded soldier who loved conflicts, wars and battles (Iliad A, 177.)

Thetis, the mother of Achilles, was strongly attached to her son and when he was born, she attempted to make him immortal by dipping him in the sacred waters of the river Styx. However, Thetis did not quite achieve what she had hoped for... while she was keeping him inside the waters, she had to hold her child by one heel, leaving one vulnerable spot in the body of Achilles. This weakness turned out to be crucial for Achilles, since he got killed during the Trojan War by an arrow that hit exactly that spot.

Tiresias

Tiresias was a blind seer from Thebes. He was famous for his **extraordinary prophetic powers**, his **talent to interpret the language of the birds** and his **longevity**: according to the legend, Tiresias lived for six to nine generations; earning respect from his contemporaries. Tiresias was the son of Everes and the Nymph Chariclo, a close friend of goddess Athena, the goddess of wisdom.

Tiresias was a descendant of the Spartoi, who were created by the teeth of a dragon.

Many conflicting stories are told about the reason of Tiresias' blindness. According to one myth, Tiresias was blinded by the gods, because he spread among the human race what the gods wanted to keep concealed. According to another myth, Tiresias was blinded by goddess Athena because he happened to see her naked. According to another version by Hesiod; Tiresias was blinded by Hera because he told her that women would have more pleasure in love than men.

The Prophecies of Tiresias are :- **That Heracles would make a lot of heroic deeds one day and also that on his way home, Odysseus would go through many adventures, but would manage to return to Ithaca one day and die of old age, away from the sea.**

Odysseus

Odysseus was one of the most cunning, yet prudent heroes of the Trojan War, according to the Greek legends. He is the main character in Homer's Epos, the "Odyssey" and is also mentioned in his Epos "Iliad" as a collaborator of Agamemnon. Odysseus was the son of Laertes, king of Ithaca, and his wife Anticlea. Odysseus was married to Penelope and they had a son called Telemachus.



Odysseus was a Greek hero who became famous through his participation in the Trojan War. He initially didn't want to join, faking madness. Only when the hero Palamedes threatened to kill his son Telemachus with a sword did Odysseus reveal his sanity and finally agreed to take part. Odysseus embarked for Troy knowing full well the oracle's prediction that he would see his family again after a very long time. Soon enough, the oracle was proven right- the Greek heroes may have managed to achieve victory over Troy, but

still the gods were dissatisfied with their arrogant attitude and decided to punish them. Odysseus, in particular, was sent out on a long, perilous journey which lasted ten years and on which he had to endure numerous adventures in stormy seas and hostile lands in order to finally reach his home, the island of Ithaca.

The accomplishments of Odysseus are rather **allegorical**, symbolizing the extremes of effort to which man is prepared to go in order to accomplish his goals.

Calchas

Calchas was a very popular seer of antiquity and famous for his **interpretations of omens**. According to Homer, he knew equally well the things of the past, present, and future. When the famous Greek hero of the Trojan War Achilles was only nine years old, Calchas declared that the city of Troy could not be taken without him. Six years later, Calchas would join the Trojan War and help the hero Agamemnon with his prophecies to conquer Troy. Calchas lived in Megara (or Mycenae). He died of grief after the fall of Troy, when he competed against seer Mopsus and was defeated by him.

Agamemnon

Agamemnon was the son of Atreus, king of Mycenae who later on got dethroned and murdered by his brother, Aegisthus. Agamemnon's wife was Clytemnestra and the couple had four children: Iphigenia, Electra, Chrysothemis and Orestes. His brother was Menelaos, the king of Sparta and husband of the beautiful Helen. According to the legend, Helen was the reason for the Trojan War.

Cephalus

Cephalus was a famous hunter from Athens, Greece son of Hermes, the Messenger of the gods and the princess Herse. According to the legend, Cephalus became the first King of the Ionian island of Cephalonia and the island was named in his honor. Cephalus was the husband of Procris, a princess of Athens, and the couple was living a happy married life. However, only two months



after their marriage, Eos, the radiant goddess of the dawn who shined with bright red light, fell in love with Cephalus. Persistently, she chased him and carried him off against his will. Soon she bore him a son named Phaethon.

Eight years after, Eos got tired of listening to Cephalus' inexhaustible love for his wife. So she decided to return him to Procris, but making him doubtful over his wife's fidelity first. For this reason, Cephalus changed his form and went back to Procris in disguise, luring her with wonderful gifts. When he managed to seduce her, Cephalus revealed himself. Ashamed, Procris fled to the island of Crete to hunt with goddess Artemis.

After their reconciliation, Procris started questioning husband's fidelity. So one day, she decided to follow him secretly on his way to the hunt and hid behind a bush. By watching the branches of the bush swaying, Cephalus believed that there was a big prey behind the bush - so he hurled his javelin and unwittingly killed his wife.

After the accident, Cephalus was exiled from Athens and ended at the city of Thebes where he fought alongside king Amphitryon. After his victory, Amphitryon gave the Ionian island of Cephalonia as a gift to Cephalus, who founded his kingdom there.

Glaucos

Glaucos was a king of Ephyra, the later Corinth, and famous for his passion for horses. Glaucos passionately loved horses and often participated in horse races. In order to make his horses stronger, Glaucos fed them with the **flesh of other animals, and oftentimes with human flesh as well**. Glaucos was the son of Sisyphus and Merope, a daughter of the titan Atlas. Merope was the only daughter of Atlas to marry a mortal man. Glaucos was the father of Bellerophon, the master of the winged Pegasus. Glaucos became mostly known because of his death. One day, while he was participating in a chariot race, his own mares threw him from the chariot and devoured him. According to another myth, it was because Aphrodite, the goddess of love, punished Glaucos because he didn't allow the female horses to mate with male horses in order to become faster.

According to another legend, the mares either drank water from a sacred source or ate a magical herb because they were hungry.

Inachos

Inachos was a son of the Titans Tethys and Oceanus. Inachos mated with his sister, Melia and two sons were born, Phoroneus and Aigialeus. Phoroneus became the king who would give fire to his people and gather them in communities. According to the legend, Inachos settled in the kingdom of Argos many generations before the flood of Deucalion. During the flood of Deucalion, Inachos saved the surviving people by leading them from the mountains to the fields. Then he collected the water inside a riverbed and created the river Inachos, which was named after him. When the area was fertile and habitable, he brought the people back to the plain. Soon, Inachos built the city of Argos (around 1986 B.C) and declared goddess Hera as the city's patron goddess.

This caused the anger of Poseidon, the god of the Seas. To take revenge, he flooded the region with water and ran the springs dry. Soon, there was no water in the land of Argos.

Theseus

Theseus was a very important Greek hero who combined **strength, power** and **wisdom**. He was the **mythical founder of Athens, Greece**. According to Pausanias, Theseus was also the first person who applied certain rules to the game of **wrestling** and elevated it into an art. Theseus was the son of Aegeus, the king of Athens, and his wife Aethra. Aegeus, concerned that he had reached a certain age without having descendants, went to Delphi to consult the Delphic oracle, but he received a prophecy he could not understand. So, on his way back home, he decided to stop by at the city of Troezen and ask its King Pittheus for advice. However, Instead of supporting him, Pittheus rather tricked Aegeus to lie with his daughter Aethra, in the hope that Aethra would conceive a child. But in the same night, Aethra had been previously seduced by the Greek god Poseidon. **This way, Theseus was considered to have had two divine origins.**

Before heading off to Athens, Aegeus left a sword and sandals under a rock and told Aethra that when his son was strong enough to lift the rock, she should send him to Athens. Knowing who the father of Theseus actually was, Aethra agreed.



Theseus kills the Minotaur

Theseus grew up in the palace of Pittheus and indeed became an extraordinarily strong man. At the age of 16, he already was capable to lift the rock and leave for Athens. Although Theseus was advised to travel by sea, he preferred to take the land route from Troezen to Athens; this way, he had to go through numerous adventures and obstacles, also known as the “**Labors of Theseus**”.

When Theseus reached Athens, he did not reveal his identity at first. Aegeus’ new wife Medea, who already had a child with Aegeus and possessed the gift of prophecy, saw a threat in Theseus and told Aegeus that Theseus was conspiring against him. So Aegeus sent Theseus away to Marathon to tame the Cretan Bull. Theseus was able to accomplish the task and, back in Athens, he sacrificed the bull to Apollo Delphinus.

When he returned to Athens, Medea again tried to harm Theseus by poisoning him. But at that point, Aegeus recognized his son from his sandals and his sword and knocked the cup from his hands. From that moment on, father and son were reunited and Medea was exiled with her son to Asia. Theseus became the king and founding hero of Athens and always occupied a special place in the hearts of the Athenians.

Perseus

Perseus was the son of Zeus and the princess Danae, daughter of the mythical king of Argos Acrisius. According to a prophecy, Danae child would be so

strong that would kill the king of Argos, so Acrisius decided to imprison his daughter in a dungeon to prevent any man from approaching her. But Zeus, the king of the gods, madly fell in love with Danae, so he transformed himself into a shower of golden rain and penetrated into the dungeon.

Danae and Zeus gave birth to a child and called him Perseus. When Acrisius found out, he put Danae and her son inside a chest of wood and threw them into the sea. The wind guided Danae and Perseus to the island of Serifos, where the fisherman Polydectes discovered them and offered them hospitality. Perseus was raised up secretly in Serifos and soon he became a very strong and courageous man... time had come for Perseus to be challenged on a very dangerous feat: the feat of delivering the head of the Gorgon Medusa.



The Gorgon Medusa was a monstrous, yet mortal creature with glorious hair that had the power to turn anyone who looked at her into stone. Messenger of the gods Hermes borrowed Perseus his winged shoes and Athena borrowed her shield, and with these weapons Perseus succeeded in defeating the Medusa.

On his way back to Serifos, Perseus fell in love with Andromeda of Aethiopia and they married. Together, they went to city of Larissa, where the funeral games were being held, and Perseus participated. While he was competing in a game, he threw the discus so far, that it struck his grandfather Acrisius fatally, fulfilling this way the prophecy once been told.

Struck by fate, Perseus founded the city of Mycenae in a small distance from the city of his grandfather. According to Greek mythology, Danae was beautiful princess, daughter of Acrisius, the King of Argos and Eurydice from Sparta.

There once came a time when the Delphic oracle of Apollo revealed that the king of Argos would die at the hands of his grandson. In order to save his life, the king confined Danae together with her nursemaid into a bronze tower to retain her virginity.



However, almighty Zeus, the king of the gods, deeply fell in love with beautiful Danae, so he transformed himself into a bright shower of gold to be able to visit her inside her dark prison. Once there, the couple moved fluidly in an amorous embrace. Danae got impregnated by Zeus, bearing him a son whom she gave the name Perseus.

When Danae's father Acrisius discovered the baby, he furiously cast them both out to sea in a wooden chest, but they floated ashore on the Isle of Serifos where they were hosted by the king of Serifos called Dictys. Years later, when Perseus had reached adulthood, he accidentally killed his grandfather Acrisius while throwing the discus, making this way the old prophecy come true.

Alcestis

Alcestis was the most beautiful of the three daughters of Pelias, King of Thessaly. When she was of an age to marry, several princes and kings appeared to propose, but Alcestis refused all of them.

Pelias, knowing that the constant denials of his daughter to all those powerful suitors could threaten his position, set a test to discover who would be the most suitable husband:

Alcestis was to be the wife of the first man to yoke a lion and a boar to a chariot.

With the aid of Apollo, a neighbouring king named Admetus succeeded in this seemingly impossible task.

But at the wedding, Admetus forgot to make the necessary sacrifice in gratitude to Artemis, the goddess of the hunt, and so he found his wedding bed full of snakes, an implication that he had to die.

Once again Apollo came to the king's assistance and persuaded the Fates to spare Admetus' life. The Fates agreed, but asked for the life of another person related to Admetus in return. As no one, not even his parents, would die on Admetus behalf, Alcestis gave her life for him.

The gods, impressed by Alcestis' sacrifice, wanted to honor the princess' unconditional love and heroism. So they decided to redeem Alcestis' soul sent the Greek hero Heracles and restore her to Admetus, younger and more beautiful than ever.

The couple continued to live happily ever after and they had three sons, who later took part in the Greek expedition against Troy.

Atalanta

According to the Greek writer Apollodorus, Atalanta was a famous hunter and runner of Arcadia, in Peloponnese, and the only woman who sailed with Jason the Argonauts.

When Atalanta was born, her father, because he desired male children, abandoned her on Mt Parthenio, in Peloponnese, near the entrance of a cave to be devoured by the beasts.

Artemis, however, the goddess of the hunt, felt pity for the little girl and sent a she-bear to the child to



suckle, until one day she was discovered by a group of hunters who brought her among themselves. Close to them, Atalanta learned all the secrets of hunting. When Atalanta reached adulthood, she still preserved her virginity and was afraid of marriage. so she spend her days hunting in the wilderness. One time, the frightful Centaurs Rhoicos and Hylaios tried to rape her, but Atalanta shot them down with her arrows and killed them.

Europe

Europe was born in Asia from Agenor, the King of Tyre and Telephassa. Europe was the sister of Cadmus, the founder of the Greek city of Thebes. One sunny day, Europe was playing with her girlfriends in the fields when Zeus, the king of the gods, passed by and noticed her.



Amazed by her beauty, he took the shape of a white bull with golden horns to abduct the maid. Europe noticed the bull among the herd and playfully mounted him; together, they traveled until Crete. Only when they arrived in Gortyn in Crete, Zeus revealed his true identity and Europe lay with Zeus under a platan which became evergreen. The couple created three sons: Minos, the king of Crete, Sarpidon and Radamanthus.

Helen

Helen (known as Beautiful Helen) was a woman of remarkable beauty. According to Greek mythology, she was the main reason for the legendary Trojan War. Euripides, the famous tragedian, states: "Helen's destiny was to

cause deaths in order to relieve the earth from arrogant humans". Helen was a daughter of Zeus, the king of the gods, and Leda (or Nemesis). Because of her exceptional beauty, many men wanted to marry Helen, among them Theseus, the founder of Athens.

Eventually, Helen became the wife of Menelaos, the legendary king of Sparta. The couple gave birth to one daughter called Hermione and probably also a son with the name Nicostratos. According to Euripides, Helen was a frivolous woman and intentionally unfaithful.

Helen's appearance was similar to the immortal goddesses and Aphrodite used to describe her as the "most beautiful woman in the world". She had a good-looking body and dressed nicely. Her hands were white and she had a beautiful face. However, Helen used to characterize herself as "dog-faced" ("kynopsis" in ancient Greek).

While Helen was married to Menelaus, she was noticed by Paris, the prince of Troy. Amazed by her beauty, Paris abducted Helen and transferred her to his hometown Troy. However, according to another myth, Paris didn't abduct Helen, but actually persuaded her to come with him and abandon her daughter Hermione who was nine years old by that time. Outraged by the abduction, Menelaus assembled a force with his brother Agamemnon and attacked Troy, causing a battle that lasted ten years.

Pandora

Pandora was the first female person ever created by the Greek gods. Zeus, the King of the gods, ordered from Hephaestus, the blacksmith, to create a female human form out of earth and water and to make her look as beautiful as the gods. All Olympian gods contributed to the creation of her appearance and personality, in both a positive and a negative way. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, blessed her with beauty and grace, but on the other side there was Apollo, the god of the music, who seeded lies into Pandora's soul... Athena, with the help of the Graces, ornated her with golden jewelry, but



Hermes, the gods' messenger, made her shameless and Hera, the wife of Zeus, blessed her with extreme curiosity. Because of the many gifts she received, the woman became entitled with the name Pandora, the "all-endowed".

On her completion, Pandora was given a jar which she was told by the gods not to touch- however, Pandora was an avid personality and couldn't resist lifting the lid. As soon as the jar was open, all evil spirits were brought to light, such as pain, hunger or greed. As soon as Pandora realized the damage, she quickly put back the lid and, this way, she luckily prevented the escape of the remaining *Hope*("Elpis") from the jar.

From that moment on, mankind started experiencing times of evil in life, but can always count on Hope as his constant comfort.

Psyche

Psyche was a young princess from Sicily, famous for her extraordinary beauty. According to the legend, she was even more beautiful than Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty. All her nationals, as well as people from all over the world, used to gather in order to admire her beauty, ignoring this way goddess Aphrodite herself.

Brokenhearted, Aphrodite decided to avenge the princess. So she asked her son Eros, the winged God of Love, to make Psyche fall in love with the most appalling creature of the world. But Eros accidentally he turned his arrow against his own heart and suddenly fell in love with Psyche himself. From that moment on, he tried to prevent mortals from falling in love with Psyche.



Time passed by, without anyone being interested to marry Psyche. The parents of Psyche began to worry about the future of their daughter. Anxiously, they went to the Oracle at Delphi to seek precious advice. Apollo, in which Eros had confided his love, told them to leave Psyche on a mountain where she would meet her future husband.

While Psyche was waiting on the mountain, Zephyr, the gentle wind of the West, took her with him and brought her into a palace made of marble and gold. Every night, an unknown man visited Psyche in her room and made love to her, without ever revealing his face. Until one night, while her lover was asleep, Psyche decided to light the face of the male with a lamp. What she saw in front of her was breathtaking... her lover was no other than Eros, the most lovable of all gods!

Amazed by what she saw, Psyche hastily put the lamp aside... when suddenly hot oil poured on the body of Eros! Eros woke up in pain and shouted furiously:

"Your suspicion killed our love. A mortal should never see the face of a god. After that, it is impossible for us to stay together..."

Saying this, Eros quickly disappeared.

Full of despair, Psyche started wandering around, searching for Eros everywhere. Soon, she found out that Eros had returned to his mother Aphrodite, who took good care of him and healed his wounds. In order to allow her to see Eros, Aphrodite ordered from Psyche many labors. One of them was to go to the Underworld to meet Persephone, the beautiful Queen of the Underworld. Once there, Psyche would have to ask for a portion of Persephone's beauty elixir and bring it to Aphrodite sealed inside a box.

On her way, Psyche managed to overcome all obstacles and obtained the elixir from Persephone successfully. On her way back, however, Psyche thought it would be best to open the box and keep some of the elixir for her... However, the box was empty and suddenly Psyche fell into a deep sleep... Luckily, Eros managed to escape from his mother on time and wake Psyche up with a tender touch. Then he quickly went to Zeus and begged him for his permission to marry Psyche. Zeus agreed and from that moment on, **Psyche became immortal.**



According to the Hesiod's Theogony (around 700 BC), in the beginning there was Chaos as a primeval state of existence. Chaos was the primal emptiness- a dark, silent, formless and infinite oddity with no trace of life. Out of Chaos, Mother Earth Gaea first came to existence. Full of life and power, Gaea created high mountains, low lands, rivers, lakes and seas. Soon Chaos created Tartarus, the embodiment of the Underworld who built his home deep below the World of Gaea. Gaea and Tartarus united and created Typhoeus (Typhoon), an appalling, fire breathing dragon with hundred heads.

Then, love appeared out of Chaos, in the form of Eros. Eros was the most handsome of all Greek gods and invincible by nature. Chaos also gave birth to Erebus, the symbolization of the dark silence, and Nyx, the embodiment of the night.

With the intervention of Eros, Erebus and Nyx united and Nyx created Aether (the Atmosphere) and Hemera (the Day).

According to Greek mythology, the Titans were a race of primordial, powerful deities that ruled during the legendary Golden Age. The Titans were created by Gaea, the goddess of the Earth and Uranus, the god of the Heaven who embraced Gaea strongly with his starry coat. Gaea and Uranus became the first divine couple of the World.

The Titans were the first dwelling in Mount Olympus in Ancient Greece, but were overthrown and expelled to the lower basement of Hades, the Tartarus, after their defeat in a huge battle with the Olympian Gods, known as Titanomachy.

Goddess Gaea, the Mother Earth



Goddess Gaea (also known as Ge) was Mother Earth in ancient Greece. Gaea had come out of Chaos, a dark, silent, formless and infinite oddity with no trace of life. She was the eldest of all beings and the invulnerable, eternal goddess who was bringing rich blessings to both the Upper- and the Underworld. Without the intervention of man, Gaea gave birth to the Mountains and the boundless Seas (the Pontus).

Next, out of Gaea came Uranus, the Heaven, who would later on become Gaea's mate, covering her with his starry coat on all sides. The couple created twelve Titans, three Cyclopes and three "Hecatoncheires",

strong creatures with hundred hands. Gaea was particularly praised and worshiped by mankind and sacred oaths were made in her name, as she also possessed the precious gift of prophecy.

Uranus, the first Ruler of the Universe

Uranus was the first ruler of the Universe and the god of the Sky. Uranus was created by Gaea in order to surround and cover her, but soon he became her mate and together they produced the remaining twelve Titans, three Cyclopes and three Hecatoncheires, hundred handed creatures, which Uranus used to loathe.

Fearful of his children overthrowing him, Uranus pushed his children one by one back into the womb of his wife Gaea. Every time this happened, Gaea was suffering over the loss of children and feeling outraged by this injustice. Until one day, she decided to hand an unbreakable sickle to her son Cronus, the youngest, but boldest of Gaea's children, giving him the order to castrate Uranus.

Cronus obeyed and at that night he hid himself in his parents' bed; hence he managed to castrate his father while he was sleeping. The blood of Uranus then started splattering onto the earth, producing Erinyes (Furies), Giants, and Melian Nymphs. Afterwards, Cronus threw his father's genitals into the sea of Paphos in Cyprus, around which foams developed, transforming slowly into Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of Love. Soon after Cronus drove his father from power, he brought back his brothers from the Tartarus and was crowned as the supreme ruler of the World.

Atlas

Atlas was the son of the Titan Iapetus and the Oceanid Clymene and brother of Prometheus, Epimetheus and Menoetius. He was married to the Titaness Pleione who bore the seven sea deities with the name Pleiades ("the sailing") and special Nymphs with the name "Hesperides", also known as the "Daughters of Evening".

Contrary to his brothers, Atlas sided with the Titans during their War with the Olympian Gods and acted as their leader, threatening the Olympians constantly. However, the Olympian Gods



managed to dethrone the Titans and cast all titans into Tartarus, the depths of the Underworld. Only Atlas became singled out and received the harshest punishment by King Zeus: he was doomed to hold up the heavens with bare hands and bear their weight on his shoulders forever. This way, Atlas became the first to know that the earth was spherical in shape. Furthermore, Atlas must have had a close relationship to the sea, since he knew all secrets of the sea ground.

Prometheus

Prometheus was the son of the titan Iapetus, the God of Mortality and Clymene. He was the father of Deucalion. Prometheus received the order from the Gods to populate the Earth and to endow mankind with powers and gifts. So he created man out of the elements of earth and water. Then he stole wisdom from Athena and fire from Hephaestus to give them both to human race for its use. When Prometheus stole fire from the King of the gods Zeus and gave it to humans, humans were no longer afraid of the cold and slowly they started progressing. However, instead of being good people, they turned out to be bad and unfair.

Furiously, the King of the gods Zeus one day decided to destroy the human race. But in Thessaly, in Central Greece, there lived the son of Prometheus, Deucalion, and his wife Pyrrha. Those people were good and righteous and Zeus felt pity for them and didn't want them to die. So he asked from Deucalion to build an ark. Deucalion obeyed, and when he built the ark and gathered all the necessary supplies, he entered the ark with his wife. Zeus then opened the heavens and it rained so much that all the land of Greece transformed into a sea. For nine days and nine nights, Deucalion's ark was wandering around, until finally it stopped at the top of Mount Parnassus. Suddenly, the rain stopped, and Deucalion with Pyrrha stepped out of the ark and made sacrifices to thank Zeus for saving them.

But, obviously, they were very sad and cried, because the world they were now living in was lonely... Zeus felt sorry for the couple, so he sent his messenger Hermes to grant them a wish. The couple asked for people.

"Go back and throw stones", he told them and so they did. The stones that Deucalion threw became men and those of Pyrrha became women. This way, once again a new race of men was created. The first stone thrown by Deucalion became a man called Hellen (Hellinas). According to the legend, from Hellen and his descendants the Greek people (the "Hellenes") originate.

Zeus, the King of the Gods doomed Prometheus for his disrespect towards the gods and, unlike his brother Atlas who was cast to the West, Prometheus was sent east to the Caucasus Mountains. There he was chained fiercely to a rock, having an eagle tearing with its talons at his liver every day. In the end, Prometheus was rescued by Heracles who shot the eagle and brought Prometheus back to Mount Olympus.



Prometheus inventing humans in presence of Athena

Cronus

Cronus was a child of Uranus, the god of the sky, and his wife Gaea. According to Apollodorus, Cronus was the youngest and weakest, but smartest of the Titans.

Cronus was married to his own sister Rhea and, after throwing their father to the depths of the underworld; they took the throne of the world together as King and Queen.

Cronus and Rhea gave birth to six of the fourteen Olympian Gods, including Zeus, the King of the Gods, Hera, the goddess of marriage and wife of Zeus, Poseidon, the god of the seas, Hestia, the goddess of the hearth, Demeter, the goddess of agriculture and Hades, the Greek god of the Underworld.



Titan Cronus swallowing one of his children amidst Chaos. Painting by Goya (1746-1828)

Just like his father Uranus, Cronus was a very envious deity and swallowed his children because he had been told that one of his descendants would dethrone him one day. So, when Rhea was expecting her last child Zeus, her parents advised her to cross the seas and reach the island of Crete. Rhea obeyed and gave birth to Zeus inside a cave in Lyctos, Crete, far away from her husband. She then left her child to be raised by Gaea and the Nymphs and quickly returned to Mount Olympus all alone.

There, she deceived Cronus by giving him a stone, wrapped in swaddling clothes, to swallow.

This way, Zeus escaped from the threat and remained in Crete until he was mature enough to fight against his father and claim the Kingdom of the World.

Rhea

Rhea was the mother of the Olympian Gods and the wife of her own brother Cronus. From the union of Rhea and Cronus, six children were created, who would later on become Olympian gods. Their names were Hera, Demeter, Hestia, Poseidon, Hades and Zeus. Cronus envied his own children ever since they were born and decided to swallow them one by one in order to ensure his throne. However, Rhea wanted to at least save their last child, Zeus, so she deceived Cronus by giving him a huge rock to swallow.

Rhea giving Cronus a huge rock to swallow wrapped in swaddling clothes instead of Zeus. Museo Capitolino, Rome, Italy

Subsequently, Zeus succeeded in rescuing his brothers and sisters. Together, they started a battle against the Titans, overthrowing them successfully. All of Rhea's children finally became Superior Deities and moved to their new palace on Mount Olympus.



Coeus

Coeus, the Greek Titan of intelligence and keeper of wisdom, married Phoebe, the Titaness of the Moon and the couple was blessed with two daughters, Asteria and Leto. Asteria was a goddess of fire, desired by Zeus, the King of the Greek gods. In order to escape his embraces, she took the form of a quail and threw herself into the sea. Her sister Leto, on the other hand, accepted the embrace of Zeus and gave birth to the Olympian twins Apollo, the Greek god of Music and Artemis, the Greek goddess of the Hunt on a Greek island named after her sister Asteria. Upon Leto's arrival, the island's name was changed into "Delos" ("the unconcealed one"). As with the other Titans, Coeus was finally overthrown by Zeus and other Olympian Gods and was sent to Tartaros, in the depths of the Underworld.

Phoebe

Phoebe was the Greek Titaness of the Brilliance and the Moon. She was married to her own brother, the Titan Coeus, and together they had two children, Asteria and Leto, who gave birth to the Olympian twins Apollo, the Greek god of the music and Artemis, the Greek goddess of the hunt. According to a myth, it was Phoebe who handed the Oracle of Delphi to Apollo, her grandson, as a present for his birthday



Hyperion

Hyperion, the Greek Titan of observation, married the Titaness Theia and the couple brought three celestial deities into existence: Helios, the personification of the Sun, Selene, the personification of the Moon and Eos (Aurora), the personification of the Dawn. The name Hyperion means "the one who flies over the earth". Theia, also known as Euryphaessa ("broad-lighted"), was the wife of Hyperion, the Greek Titan of observation. The couple gave birth to three celestial deities: Helios, the personification of the Sun, Selene, the personification of the Moon and the rosy-fingered Eos (Aurora), the personification of the Dawn.

Oceanus

Oceanus was the perfect river and the ruler of the waters and the seas. According to the Greek poet Homer, he was the origin of all things and of all deities. Oceanus was the eldest of all Titans. He was born out Gaea, the Mother Earth, and Uranus, the Ruler of the heaven, when Uranus watered Gaea with divine rain. Oceanus formed a union with the golden wreathed Titaness Tethys and they created three thousand rivers three thousand Nymphs. They gave their daughters the name “Oceanids”.

The Rivers

Among the rivers were Inachos, after whom the river Inachos in Argos, Greece is named and Asopos, after whom the river Asopos is named, which runs through the borders of the prefectures of Attica and Boeotia.

The Oceanids

The main Oceanids were Styx, who personified the sacred river of the Underworld, Amphitrite, the future wife of Poseidon and Metis, the deity who bore inside herself all the wisdom of the world. Metis was the first wife of Zeus, the king of the gods, and mother of Athena, the Olympian goddess of Wisdom and War.

Tethys



Tethys was a golden wreathed, beloved sea deity who bore inside herself all the world's wisdom. Tethys was the wife of the Titan of the Seas, Oceanus. From their union sprang out three thousand Nymphs, the so-called “Oceanids” and three thousand rivers. Among the children were Inachos, after whom the river Inachos in Argos, Greece is named and Asopos, after whom the river Asopos is named. Asopos runs through the borders of the

prefectures of Attica and Boeotia. Tethys was the Titaness who raised the Olympian goddess Hera during the Titans' War with the Olympian gods (also known as Titanomachy).

Iapetus

Iapetus, the Greek Titan of mortality, was married to the Oceanid Asia, the Nymph Clymene, the Oceanid Aethra or the Titaness Themis. Iapetus was the father of Prometheus, who was the fire bearer of mankind, and also brought the reckless Epimetheus into existence, who gave mankind only a few hairs and nails. Furthermore, he fathered Atlas, the Titan of Astronomy, and Menoetius, whom Zeus struck with his thunderbolt during his battle with the Titans.

Mnemosyne

Mnemosyne was the Titaness of Memory, who used to help the humans remember the myths of the gods. Mnemosyne was a daughter of Uranus and Gaea, the Mother Earth. Zeus, the king of the gods, lied with Mnemosyne for nine consecutive nights in order to create deities who were meant to praise the Olympian Gods' victory over the Titans. Nine months later, Mnemosyne brought nine daughters into existence. The daughters were named Muses and they became the goddesses of the Arts and the Sciences in Ancient Greece



Crius

Crius, the Greek Titan of leadership and domestic animals, married the bright goddess Eurybia, the daughter of Pontus. The couple brought Astraeos, Pallas and Perses into existence.

Themis

Themis was the goddess who could foresee the future and for that reason she became an oracle of Delphi. Soon, she evolved into the goddess who maintained the moral order among gods and men, always making sure that justice was done and the weak were protected.

She was the constant companion of Zeus, the Lord of the Gods. When she lied with Zeus the couple gave birth to the Horae, who personified the seasons, and the Fates, who symbolized destiny. According to Homer, Themis had beautiful cheeks and she was usually depicted as blind, holding a scale in her hand.

- Adamastos (“untamed”)- title of the Greek god Hades
- Agoraios (“commercial”)- title of the Greek god Hermes
- Agrionius (“fierce”)- title of the Greek god Dionysus
- Agrotera (“the huntress”)- title of the Greek god Artemis
- Aighiochos (“lord of thunderstorms”) - title of the Greek god Zeus
- Aigobolos (“Goatslayer”) - title of the Greek god Dionysus
- Alexikakos (“keeping away the bad”) - title of the Greek god Apollo
- Aloas (“threshing”)- title of the Greek god Demeter
- Anadyomene (“arising”) - title of the Greek god Aphrodite
- Anemotis (“protector of the winds”) - title of the Greek god Athena
- Anikatos (“irresistible”) - title of the Greek god Eros
- Areia (“war-like”) - title of the Greek god Athena
- Argeiphontes (“Argus-slayer”) - title of the Greek god Hermes
- Ariste (“perfect”) - title of the Greek god Artemis
- Asimodoxaros (“Silver-Bowed”) - title of the Greek god Apollo

Demigods

Definition of Demigods: Demigods were the offspring of a deity and mortal, half-gods, who were invariably renowned for their courage and great strength. Many of the ancient gods, like Zeus, had children as a result of their romantic involvement with mortals. Demigods, being part god and part mortal, had great powers and abilities and often featured in the mythology of the Ancient Greeks and Romans. The Demigods were fabulous famous heroes such as Achilles, Hercules, Theseus and Perseus.

Achilles	Achilles was one of the demigods and the son of Thetis, a minor sea-goddess and Peleus, the king of Myrmidons
Aeacus	Aeacus was one of the demigods and the son of a son of Zeus and Aegina who was the daughter of a river god. He was the father of Telamon and Peleus and grandfather of Ajax and Achilles
Aeneas	Aeneas was one of the demigods and the son of the goddess Aphrodite and Prince Anchises
Amphion	Amphion was one of the demigods and a son of Zeus and Antiope

Arcas	Arcas was one of the demigods and a son of Zeus and Callisto a nymph and minor goddess associated with Aphrodite
Clymene	Clymene was one of the demigods and the daughter of the Titan gods Oceanus and Tethys
Dardanus	Dardanus was a demigod and a son of Zeus and Electra who was the daughter of Atlas
Epaphus	Epaphus was one of the demigods and a son of Zeus and Io, a priestess of the goddess Hera
Harmonia	Harmonia was one of the demigods and a daughter of Zeus and Electra
Helen of Troy	Helen of Troy was one of the demigods and a daughter of Zeus and Leda who was queen of Sparta
Hercules	Hercules (Heracles in Greek) was a demigod and a son of Zeus (Roman equivalent Jupiter) and the mortal Alcmena
Iasus	Iasus was a demigod and a son of Zeus and Electra (one of the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione). He was the brother of Dardanus
Memnon	Memnon was one of the demigods and the son of Tithonus and Eos, aka Aurora, who was a Titan goddess of the dawn
Orion	Orion was one of the demigods and a son of the sea god Poseidon and Euryale
Orpheus	Orpheus was one of the demigods and a son of Calliope and the god Apollo
Perseus	Perseus was one of the demigods and a son of Zeus and Danae
Pollux	Pollux was one of the demigods and a son of Zeus and the mortal Leda. He was the twin brother of Castor
Theseus	Theseus was one of the demigods and a son of Poseidon and Aethra
Tityos	Tityos was one of the demigods and a son of Zeus and Elara
Zethes	Zethes was one of the demigods and a son of Boreas (the Greek god of the cold north wind and the bringer of winter) and Oreithyia, daughter of King Erechtheus of Athens. His brother was Calais

Legends of Famous Demigods

There are many myths and legends surrounding the Greek demigods, some of the most famous stories about demigods were documented in the Iliad and the Odyssey by the Greek writer Homer. The most famous of the demigods were Achilles, Hercules, Theseus, Perseus and Helen of Troy. A short summary of the mythology surrounding these famous Greek demigods are detailed below.

Achilles

There are many myths and legend surrounding the Greek Demigod Achilles. According to Greek mythology Achilles was a demigod and the son of Thetis, a minor sea-goddess and Peleus, the king of Myrmidons, an ancient tribe of Greece. He is famous for being the strongest and the bravest of all the Greeks who fought in the Trojan War. His mother, Thetis, dipped Achilles into the River Styx when he was a baby and he was made invulnerable, except at the heel by which she held him.

During the Trojan war Achilles quarrelled with Agamemnon and he refused to take part in further battles. Achilles allowed his much loved cousin Patroclus to fight in his armor and Patroclus was killed by the Trojan warrior Hector. Achilles, in a terrible rage, returned to battle and killed Hector dragging his body around the walls of Troy. Paris killed then killed Achilles with an arrow guided by Apollo to the heel of Achilles.

Perseus

Perseus was a demigod and a son of Zeus and the Danae. His adventures play an important part in Greek Mythology. Perseus was sent on an impossible quest by King Polydectes, who hoped that Perseus would kill. He sent the demigod Perseus to fetch the head of the Gorgon Medusa, thinking that Perseus would die in the attempt. The Greek gods intervened and gave Perseus some magical weapons. The Greek god Hermes gave him a curved sword and winged sandals, the Greek goddess Athena gave Perseus a mirror-like shield, and the god Hades gave Perseus a helmet that made him invisible. Perseus had to consult the Graeae (the Gray Witches) to find out the whereabouts of the Gorgon Medusa. The Graeae were three perpetually old women, who had to share one eye and one tooth among them. The demigod Perseus tricked the old women by taking their eye forcing them to tell him where he could find the gorgons, their sisters. Perseus slew Medusa and rescued Andromeda from a sea monster and married her. Perseus gave the Medusa head to the goddess Athena.

Theseus

There are many famous myths surrounding the Greek Demigod Theseus. Theseus was a demigod and a son of Poseidon and Aethra. Theseus slew many legendary villains, including Sinis, Sciron, and Procrustes. But his greatest triumph was in killing the Minotaur that was owned by King Minos of Crete

and kept in a labyrinth at Knossos. The Minotaur was a fierce monster, half man and half bull. Theseus was imprisoned in Hades until Hercules rescued him. The demigod Theseus was treacherously murdered by King Lycomedes.

Female Demigods – Helen of Troy, Harmonia and Clymene

Three famous female demigods (demigoddesses) are Clymene, Harmonia and, surprisingly to some, Helen of Troy.

Clymene was a demigod and the daughter of the Titan gods Oceanus and Tethys and the mother of Atlas and Prometheus.

Harmonia was the daughter of Zeus and Electra and was the wife of Cadmus. The gods turned Harmonia into a serpent.

Helen of Troy

The beautiful Helen was the daughter of the Greek god Zeus and Leda who was the wife of Tyndareus, the king of Sparta. According to Greek mythology Leda was seduced by Zeus, who visited her in the form of a swan. Helen was the sister of Castor and Pollux. Helen married Menelaus the, king of Sparta, the younger brother of Agamemnon. Prince Paris of Troy abducted Helen and took her to Troy, which started the nine year Trojan War. The participants of the Trojan War included heroes such as Hector, Achilles, Odysseus, and Ajax. The Greeks built a large hollow wooden horse in which a small group of warriors were concealed. The Trojans took the horse within the city walls. At night the Greeks crept out of the horse and opened the city gates, and Troy was destroyed. The Greek gods took great interest in the war. Poseidon, Hera, and Athena helped the Greeks, whilst Aphrodite and Ares helped the Trojans. Zeus and Apollo remained impartial. The legend of the demigods involved in the Trojan War were documented in the the Iliad and Odyssey. Helen of Troy was reconciled with Menelaus after the war, and returned to Sparta.

Major and minor deities of Greek mythology -

Achelois - One of the moon goddesses.

Achelous - The patron god of the Achelous river.

Aeolus - God of air and the winds.

Aether - God of light and the atmosphere.

Alastor - God of family feuds.

Alcyone - One of the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione.

Alectrona - Early Greek goddess of the sun.

Amphitrite - (Salacia) The wife of Poseidon and a Nereid.

Antheia - Goddess of gardens, flowers, swamps, and marshes.

Aphaea - (Aphaia) A Greek goddess who was worshipped exclusively at a single sanctuary on the island of Aegina in the Saronic Gulf.

Aphrodite - (Anadyomene, Turan, Venus) Goddess of love and beauty. Aphrodite (Greek mythology) was the goddess of love, beauty, and sensuality. Known in Roman mythology as Venus, she was said to be the most beautiful of the goddesses, and had many suitors, both god and human.

In ancient Greece, men and gods would go to war over a woman's beauty (remember Helen of Troy?), so Zeus, as the leader of the Olympic gods suspected that Aphrodite would cause a jealous stir among the gods as long as she remained single. He then married her to Hephaestus, the unattractive and partly crippled god of blacksmithing (amongst other things). Zeus figured this would keep things quiet, but of course when it comes to Greek and Roman mythology, when does that ever happen?

Aphrodite knew she could have any man she wanted, and wasn't particularly pleased with Zeus marrying her off. She was very independent for a woman of the day, though in fairness she was a goddess. Aphrodite myths are abound with tales of her various lovers, and from them, her various children.

Of those children, the most famous has to be Eros, god of love, known better to most as Cupid of Roman mythology. Ironically, the love goddess wanted Eros to follow in her forced tradition and marry someone unattractive, but like his mother Eros had to follow his heart and married the beautiful Psyche. This did not please Aphrodite, but despite her attempts at sabotaging the relationship, Eros convinced Zeus to make Psyche immortal, leaving Psyche with an angry mother-in-law.

The goddess of love was no stranger to causing trouble, though she didn't intend to (outside of sticking her nose into her son's love life). Her relationship with the beautiful Adonis led to his death by the hand of the jealous god of war, Ares. She also inadvertently started the Trojan War by bribing a poor human man into announcing her the most perfect of all the goddesses. His bribe - Helen of Troy. The problem - she was already married. If you don't already know the story, you can guess how that worked out (Hint: it's not called the Trojan WAR for nothing.)

Apollo - (Apollon, Apulu, Phoebus) God of the sun, music, healing, and herding. Apollo (Greek mythology) is one most well-known of the Greek gods, and was worshiped as one of the primary sun gods in the ancient world. He is one of few gods who does not have a different name in Roman mythology than he does in Greek mythology. We all know how important the sun is to life on Earth (as in, it wouldn't exist without it), and though they did not quite understand the science behind it all, the ancient Greeks knew well that pleasing the sun god was vitally important. Apollo was therefore a very popular and highly worshiped god who was also associated with healing, herding, music, and the arts.



Apollo is the son of Zeus and Leto, and has a twin sister, Artemis who, appropriately, is the goddess of the moon. Both were skilled with a bow and arrow, though bow hunting was certainly Artemis's primary function. Apollo is often shown with a bow, but also a sword and a lyre (made for him by fellow god Hermes). He also rode a chariot through the sky drawn by three horses made of fire.

In Greek mythology Apollo appears in several tales, including the Trojan War where he took the side of the Trojans, and in the ancient story of his battle with Ladon the Python in the Garden of the Hesperides. Apollo kills the snake guarding Delphi, which was thought to be the center of the Earth. Once victorious, the spot became home to the great Temple of Apollo, where the Oracles of Delphi resided.



Every four years the Greeks would host the Pythian Games in Delphi in honor of the athletic god's victory over the Python. The Oracles were also known as "Pythia" in respect to this great victory. The Pythian Games eventually combined with similar events to become what we know today as the Olympic Games.

Apollo also shows up in more modern mythology via the Scriptures of Delphi where he unintentionally helps create the first vampires by cursing a human rival to be burned by Apollo's sun should he ever come into the daylight again.

Ares - (Enyalios, Mars, Aries) God of chaotic war. Ares (Greek mythology) is best known as the God of War. Known to the Romans as Mars, he was one of the Olympians - the gods of the highest order of Olympus. Ares is sometimes shown in art as both young and old, but he always carried a spear and wore a helmet - perpetually ready for battle.

Ares was not the only god of war in Greek mythology. Athena, another Olympian, was also a god of war, but in a very different context. Athena represented the strategic, organized, and victorious side of battle while Ares represented the opposite - bloodlust, courage, and ferocity. Both were thought to be equally important in battle, and warriors would pray for their favor. It is said that Ares would even accepted human sacrifices in order to gain his assistance.

In Greek mythology Ares often had a quick temper and was prone to jealous outbursts. He lusted after Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and eventually lost her to Adonis, the most beautiful man in the world. Not accepting defeat (as

a god of war shouldn't I suppose), he turned himself into a boar and killed Adonis.

Ares (Greek mythology) was also father to the famous Amazon women of the Doiantian Plain. These hardy warrior women were some of the most brutal warriors in all of mythology. Ironically, their mother was Harmonia, the goddess of harmony and concord. I guess they took after their father.

In modern mythology, Ares is probably best known as the title "villain" in the hit video game series "God of War". Many people confuse the central character in the series, Kratos, as the god of war, yet Kratos, the character from the game, is actually a variation on Greek Mythology's Kratos, the God of Strength.

Aristaeus - Patron god of animal husbandry, bee-keeping, and fruit trees.

Artemis - (Agrotora, Amarynthia, Cynthia, Kourotrophos, Locheia, Orthia, Phoebe, Potnia Theron) Goddess of the moon, hunting, and nursing. Artemis (Greek mythology) is the goddess of the moon and hunting. She also represented the female side of childbirth and chastity. Her twin brother is the sun god Apollo, and their parents are Zeus and Leto. Along with her brother, Artemis is often simultaneously a healer and a hunter. The moon goddess is known for protecting and assisting young flocks, but is also known as "the stag-killer" for her proficient hunting with a bow and arrow, her signature weapon.

In Greek mythology Artemis prided herself on her maidenhood, or chastity. She often had an entourage of nymphs around her who were her friends, attendants, and hunting partners. In one famous Artemis myth Aktaion, a male hunter, stumbled upon the goddess bathing in the woods. She was so enraged at this violation of her privacy that she turned the hunter into a stag and drove his dogs into a frenzy, who subsequently chased down and ate him.

This kind of hot temper was not unusual for the gods, but speaks to the interesting duality of Artemis in particular. She often chooses to heal, nourish, and cultivate young girls and animals (and sometimes warriors), but at the same time will hunt down the same animals in their older age or cast a deadly disease upon a person without any remorse or hesitation.

It is said that the moon is the astrological representative of ever-changing moods. Just as the tides shift, pushing in or pulling out, so do those ruled by the moon change in emotion throughout a single day. Perhaps Artemis, the moon goddess, is simply influenced by this nature. In many places in Greek

mythology she appears to be an emotional teenager, and often gets in fights with her step-mother Hera.

In a more modern myth found in the Scriptures of Delphi, Artemis takes pity on a young hunter who is cursed by Apollo to live only by the light of the moon and gave him supernatural hunting powers in exchange for lifelong devotion to her alone. This is said to have been the origination of the first vampire.

Asclepius - God of health and medicine.

Astraea - The Star Maiden - a goddess of justice, included in Virgo and Libra mythologies. Astraea is a minor but important goddess from Greek mythology. Known as the “Star Maiden” or “Star Goddess”, she is best known for being the last immortal to live among the humans on Earth before leaving in disgust of humanity’s brutality and wickedness.

There are arguments about who her parents are. She is the daughter of both Zeus and Themis or of Eos and Astraeus. She is often depicted as a winged woman, carrying a torch and the scales of justice. She is also said to have helped Zeus in battle, and is sometimes portrayed carrying his lightning bolts with her.

Astraea is most often associated with two of the major constellation myths, those of Virgo and Libra. While there is much debate about her role in Virgo mythology, I believe that she is the most likely candidate for the role of Virgo. Whether she is or isn’t the figure of the Virgo myth, she is definitely very closely connected to both Virgo and Libra mythology.

Some believe that Astraea’s image is the portrayed on the “Justice” card in the major arcana of the tarot. There is reason to believe that this is true. In the most famous rendition of the card’s artwork, a winged woman carrying a torch and thunderbolts stands beside the throne of Zeus. The name “Astrape” is inscribed above her.

Though often called “the virgin goddess”, Astraea is best known as a goddess of Justice, along with Dike (Greek mythology) and Erigone (Roman mythology), with whom she is often interchangeably mentioned. When she left Earth for the heavens, she essentially took the “Golden Age of Man” with her. Later literature inferred that once humanity realized what it had done, they hoped for her to return, inferring that she would bring the Golden Age back with her. This is notably similar to the “return of the messiah” in Christian mythology.

Though not one of the most well-known the Greek gods and goddesses, the Star Maiden's influence has lasted throughout the years. Greek epics and English literature refer to her in poems over several centuries, including one by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

In modern mythology the image of Astraea is re-imagined in the video game "Demon's Souls" published by Atlas Software in 2009. In the game, a character named "Maiden Astraea" rules over a land of sickness and disease. She is a beautiful, powerful, and once noble woman whose soul has been corrupted by demonic spirits and has charged her with taking care of those living in the uncivilized, plague-infested land. This re-imagination combines the images of the goddess Astraea with the role of the immortal monster Echidna, who is also an important mother figure in Greek mythology. Whether this was intentional or not, it serves as an interesting example of ancient mythology transformed into modern mythology.

Até - Goddess of mischief.

Athena - (Asana, Athene, Minerva, Menerva) Goddess of wisdom, poetry, art, and the strategic side of war. Athena, the Greek goddess of war and wisdom (amongst other things), was one of the most powerful of all of the gods and goddesses in Greek mythology. Athena was one of the many daughters of the King of gods, Zeus, but she was the only one that Zeus actually birthed himself!

It is said that her mother was Metis, the Titan goddess of wisdom, and Zeus's original wife. To understand how she could have a mother but be born solely from her father requires a little backtracking into Greek mythology. Please bear with me.

Zeus came to power by overthrowing his father, Cronus. Cronus's mother, the greath earth goddess Gaia, foretold a prophecy in which one of Cronus's children would eventually overthrow him and take control of both gods and men alike. Cronus decided that the solution to this problem was to devour each and every one of his children after they were born. Eventually his wife, Rhea, couldn't take it anymore and gave him a stone wrapped in a baby blanket, which he promptly swallowed - thus saving her last son, Zeus, from this terrible fate. Eventually Zeus fulfilled the prophecy by overthrowing his father and splitting him open, which is how the rest of Cronus and Rhea's children came spilling out. Zeus became King of gods and men and the days where the Titans ruled were done.



Now, what does this have to do with Athena? Well, it turns out that Gaia had another prophecy once Zeus became an adult. She foretold that his wife, Metis, would first give birth to a powerful daughter then would give birth to a son who would overthrow Zeus the way he overthrew his father. Knowing this, Zeus devoured Metis while she was still pregnant with their daughter to avoid this son ever being born.

His plan worked in that he never had a son by Metis, but what Zeus didn't realize was that his daughter by Metis was more strong-willed than he imagined. After a bout of terrible headaches Zeus finally begged the blacksmith god Hephaestus to split his head open with an axe to relieve the pressure. Out popped the goddess Athena, fully dressed in armor and ready to do battle.

This story of her birth offers a great insight into the goddess herself. The multifaceted Athena, the Greek goddess of war, wisdom, poetry, artisans, craftworking, and intellect, was as strong-willed and powerful as her great-grandmother Gaia had predicted. She was well-known to be Zeus's favorite daughter, and was forever loyal to her father, no matter what he got himself into.

It may seem contradictory for the goddess of art and wisdom to also be a goddess of war, but in this case it made sense. Another son of Zeus, Ares, was also a god of war, yet the term "war" meant two entirely different things to these very different gods. Ares was the god of chaotic battle, bloodlust, ferocity, courage, and violence. On the other hand, Athena was the goddess of strategy, organized fighting, advanced weaponry, and skilled manipulation on the battlefield. If Ares was offense, Athena was defense. If Ares represented pure force, Athena represented controlled strength. The two were not enemies by any means, but warriors would often choose one or the other to pray for their favor depending on their position in battle and the style they chose to fight with.

Athena was very involved in human affairs and often took sides in great battles, such as Greece versus Troy. She always took a cunning, strategic point

of view, though, making her a powerful ally in any war. In modern language “Athena the Greek goddess of war” is less fitting than “Athena the Greek goddess of wisdom”, even in reference to her role in battles. It was her wisdom and strategic planning that often turned the tide of a battle to the victor.

It is probably obvious that the name “Athena” is similar to the famous Greek capital city of “Athens”. This is no coincidence. Originally Athens was founded as “Attica”, and both Athena and the the great sea god Poseidon both wanted to be the patron gods of the city. They both gave a gift to the city in order to earn its patronage. First, Poseidon used his mighty trident to create a spring in the middle of the city, which flowed into the sea, giving the Atticans a direct line to the water. In response, Athena created an olive tree in the city center, which provided food, wood, and oil in endless supply. Seeing the great benefit of the tree over that of the ocean stream, the people of Attica chose Athena as their patron god and changed the name of the city to “Athens”.



The goddess of war and wisdom shows up in many myths, including the tapestry contest with the mortal Arachne, and the transformation of the maiden Medusa into a hideous gorgon. Athena also plays a large role in Homer’s legendary epic, “The Odyssey”.

Atlas - The Primordial Titan who carried the world on his back.

Atropos - One of The Fates - She cut the thread of life and chose the manner of a persons death.

Attis - The (minor) god of rebirth.

Bia - The goddess of force.

Boreas - (Aquilo, Aquilon) The North Wind. One of the Anemoi (wind gods).

Brizo - Protector of Mariners.

Caerus – (Kairos, Occasio, Tempus) The (minor) god of luck and opportunity.

Calliope - One of the Muses. Represented epic poetry. The famous muses of Greek mythology played an important part of ancient Greek culture. The

nine daughters of the King of Gods Zeus and the Titan goddess of memory Mnemosyne were the very embodiment of the arts and sciences, and were thought to be the reason certain artists and thinkers were more gifted than others. They were immortal goddesses that inspired great works from both gods and humans alike.

The muses fittingly lived with Apollo, the god of music and the arts, who was their leader, but did not claim them as his wives. Instead, the muses lived with Apollo on the slopes of Mount Parnassus by the Castalian spring and roamed freely from there to spread their inspiration around the ancient world. They often became lovers of both gods and great artists, and their inspiration was highly desired by all artists and thinkers. Their very presence inspired greatness in men, but no one could truly keep them around for long, mimicing the fleeting nature of inspiration itself.

The muses of Greek mythology are particularly interesting in that they make it very clear what the values of their time were. Since the nine muses were to encompass all that was truly important to mankind, their very existence reveals much about the people of their time. It is clear by the nature of the muses that the ancient Greeks and Romans revered music, writing, dance, drama, history, and astronomy to a high degree. Each muse represented a different aspect of these areas, and were all considered equally important.

The 9 Muses of Greek mythology

Clio represented history and was portrayed holding a scroll. Euterpe represented music and was portrayed playing a double flute. Thalia represented comedy and held a comic mask, a shepherd's staff, or an ivy wreath. Melpomene represented tragedy and held a tragic drama mask and an ivy wreath. Terpsichorde represented dance and was often shown playing the lyre. Erato represented the singing of love songs and poetry and also played a lyre. Polyhymnia represented the sacred song and was always shown as melancholy and pensive. Urania represented astronomy and held a celestial globe. Calliope represented epics, both in writing and song, and carried with her a wax tablet with which to write on.

Calypso - The sea nymph who held Odysseus prisoner for seven years.

Castor - One of the twins who represent Gemini. The origins of some constellation myths are heavily debated. Gemini mythology, luckily, is pretty straightforward.

By all accounts, the twins represented in Gemini mythology are Castor and Pollux of Greek mythology. They share the same mother, Leda (Greek mythology), but have different fathers. Castor's father is Tyndarus, the King of Sparta, and Leda's husband. Pollux's father is the god Zeus (Greek mythology). As such, Pollux is an immortal while his twin brother Castor is mortal.

The twins were young, handsome, and adventurous. They took part in many adventures together and were well known for their livelihood and curiosity. Castor was a renowned horseman, while Pollux was known for his great strength.

Their sister is the beautiful Helen of Troy, whom the great Trojan War is fought over. The twins not only took part in that war together, but were also Argonauts on the quest for the Golden Fleece. Where Gemini mythology comes into play is when Castor, being mortal, finally dies. Having spent their whole lives together, Pollux is distraught. He doesn't want to live without his twin brother, but since he is immortal, there is nothing he can do. He begs his father, Zeus, for help.

Zeus decides that rather than killing Pollux so he can be with Castor, he makes Castor immortal also, and the two of them get to live together forever as the constellation Gemini. Perhaps the reason that this story is rarely contested is because two of the actual stars in the constellation of Gemini are named "Castor" and "Pollux". This is a rare case where astronomy and mythology actually agree, and thus, Gemini mythology is born.

Celaeno - The name of a wife of Poseidon.

Cerus - The wild bull tamed by Persephone, made into the Taurus constellation. The Taurus myth is most often interpreted as the story of Zeus and Europa, where the Greek god carried the Phoenician princess away to Crete to marry her by disguising himself as a white bull. Then I guess the bull, that was really Zeus, became the Taurus constellation, but not really, because now the bull and Zeus are different... or something. The Scriptures of Delphi give us another possible explanation of the Taurus constellation, one that I find a bit more satisfying.

According to the alternate myth, the mythology of Taurus begins with a wandering bull known as Cerus. Cerus was a large and powerful bull who villagers were terrified of because of his tendency to trample their villages to pieces on a whim. He was owned by no one, and none of the farmers knew where he came from. Though he was not immortal, most people assumed him to be because of his sheer size and strength and the fact that despite all of the destruction he caused nobody was ever able to stop him.

The bull is wild and out of control, choosing to follow his emotions on a whim. One day the spring goddess Persephone finds him trampling through a field of recently-bloomed flowers and goes to him. Though he cannot speak, he seems to understand her and her presence calms her. They form a bond together, and the bull learns to behave himself. Persephone teaches the bull patience and how to use his strength wisely.

After In fact, every year in the spring when Persephone returns to the land, Cerus returns to the land to join her. She sits upon his back and he runs her through the fields, allowing her to set all of the plants in bloom as they ride by. In the fall when Persephone returns to Hades, Cerus returns to the sky as the Taurus constellation.

Ceto - a sea monster goddess who was also the mother of other sea monsters.

Chaos - The nothingness that all else sprung from.

Charon - The Ferryman of Hades. He had to be paid to help one cross the river Styx.

Chronos - God of time and agriculture, Father of the Titans and Three Eldest Olympians.



*Cronus swallowing one
of his children*

Circe - A goddess who transformed her enemies into beasts.

Clio - One of the Muses. She represented History.

Clotho - (Nona) One of the Fates - Spun the thread of life from her distaff onto her spindle.

Crios - The crab who protected the sea nymphs, made into the Cancer constellation. Had the Scriptures of Delphi never shown up, the mythology of Cancer would be pretty lame indeed.

Up until now, Cancer was identified by the giant crab that Hercules (Greek mythology) stepped on and killed while fighting the Hydra. Never was there a more pathetic character in all of mythology. The crab literally pinches Hercules' toe, to which Hercules just crushes him, and that's the end of that. Supposedly the Greek goddess Hera felt bad

and put him in the sky.

Luckily, the Scriptures of Delphi has a different version. Here we get a brand new look, and honestly, a much better explanation behind the mythology of Cancer.

According to the “Scriptures”, a giant crab named Crios guarded the sea nymphs in the Greek god Poseidon’s kingdom. He was enormous and strong, and Poseidon himself had blessed him with immortality.

When the god of monsters Typhon (Greek mythology) terrorized the gods of Olympus, Poseidon, along with most of the other gods, went into hiding. He left Crios in charge of protecting the sea nymphs, who were considered to be Poseidon’s daughters. The crab took his role as protector very seriously, and wouldn’t let any of the sea nymphs outside of his reach. After a while, some of the sea nymphs became restless, and convinced that they were in no danger from Typhon, escaped into the open sea.

Crios could not chase them as he was charged with protecting the other sea nymphs, so he enlisted the help of the giant squid, Vamari. Little did he know that Vamari (whose name translates to “Vampire Squid”) had ill intentions, and when he caught up to the sea nymphs, he devoured them.

When Vamari returned to Crios, he told the crab that despite a valiant effort, he could not find any of the missing sea nymphs. Crios knew that he was lying and attacked him. They battled for hours until the crab finally won. But he had sustained such bad injuries that he was terribly crippled from that time forward. Since he was immortal, though, he could not die, but had to live in pain.

When Poseidon returned he saw the bravery that the crab had shown and relieved him of his pain, but not his immortality, by placing him in the sky as the constellation Cancer.

Cybele - Goddess of caverns, mountains, nature and wild animals.

Demeter - Goddess of the harvest. Demeter, Greek goddess of the harvest, was an important and powerful figure in Greek mythology. She was the daughter of Cronos and Rhea, and one of the 12 Olympian gods and goddesses along with her siblings Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, and Hestia. The 12 Olympian gods were those that lived upon Mount Olympus and watched over much of the human race from there.

As it is today, and probably will be forever, the growth of crops was essential to human survival, which meant Demeter - goddess of harvest, vegetation, fruitfulness, agriculture, and fertility - was of immense importance

to human beings and was worshipped appropriately. Most famously, she had a major following just south of Athens at Eleusis, where a cult dedicated an annual celebration of the rites of autumn in her honor.

In Demeter, Greek mythology had its caretaker and mother figure. This was a very important role that other goddesses sometimes played a part of, but none as fully as Demeter. Her grandmother, Gaia, was said to be the living Earth, though Demeter's name literally translates as "mother earth". This is probably because she was so actively involved in the growth and harvest of the food grown from the earth. Though vital, it was easy for some to take the harvest goddess's role for granted. It wasn't until she stopped doing her job that both the gods and humanity realized how important to human life Demeter really was.

It was none other than Zeus himself that tested the will of Demeter by promising her their daughter, the Spring goddess Persephone, to the god of the Underworld, Hades. The main problem was that Zeus failed to consult Persephone's mother on the impending marriage, and when the impatient Hades rose from the Underworld and abducted Persephone from a flowery field, Demeter was distraught.

Having no idea what had happened, Demeter, Greek goddess though she was, dropped everything and wandered the land, searching in vain for traces of her daughter. While searched and mourned, the crops failed and the land became barren. Humans prayed to the gods to return Persephone to her mother before the situation became dire. Zeus was in a bind. On one hand he had to appease Demeter somehow, but if he went back on his promise to Hades then the god of the Underworld would be furious, as he already felt slighted by having to live in the land of the dead while other gods enjoyed their seats on Mount Olympus.

Not wanting to have to tell Demeter about his error in judgment, Zeus sent the messenger god Hermes to her to explain the situation. Hermes was known as something of a "trickster" and was more capable than most at resolving these kinds of situations with his quick thinking and silver tongue. He convinced the gods to agree that Persephone could return to the earth as long as she hadn't eaten anything in the Underworld. It was well known that Persephone had been on a hunger strike while in captivity, but it seems she had eaten from a single pomegranate. It was therefore determined that Persephone would be returned to her mother during the Spring season when the flowers were to bloom and new life was to be born. She would then

return every winter to the Underworld to take on her duties as goddess of the Underworld and wife to Hades.

Reluctantly, Demeter and Hades agreed to this compromise and thus the myth of the seasons was born. Demeter returned to her role as the harvest goddess and celebrated with her Elusian cult every spring when her daughter returned. Demeter is sometimes considered the figure in the constellation Virgo, a reasonable explanation for the constellation, but one that I personally have some doubts about.

Dinlas - Guardian of the ancient city of Lamark, where wounded heroes could heal after battle.

Dionysus - God of wine and pleasure. Dionysus, Greek god of wine and pleasure, is one of the more mysterious characters in Greek mythology. Known to the Romans as Bacchus, Greek mythology's Dionysus was the son of the powerful sky god Zeus, but his mother was the mortal Semele, princess of Thebes.

Zeus was well known for having many children from various affairs, and his wife Hera, Queen of the gods, was equally well known for seeking revenge on those women and her husband's illegitimate children. Though he may have been a prominent Greek god, Dionysus was still not spared Hera's wrath. In fact, she actually managed to have him killed not once, but twice as an infant! Being a Greek god Dionysus managed to survive both times with the help of his father Zeus, his grandmother Rhea, and Hermes, the Greek messenger god.

After barely escaping death twice, Dionysus was taken far away to the mythical Mount Nysa to be protected from Hera. There he was raised in a cave by mountain nymphs, the Hyades. Once he was grown he rarely stayed in one place. Rather than settle down on Mount Olympus with the other gods, Dionysus chose to travel about the world with his hard-partying followers, particularly the Satyrs and the Maenads.

The Maenads were his liberated female followers, who were thought to gain almost super-human strength while drinking their patron god's wine. The satyrs were small men with goat legs and horns who, like centaurs, enjoyed nothing more than a loud, drunken party. The festivities of these groups, as well as with all other of Dionysus's followers, were well known to be ecstatic drunken orgies, which was often, but not always, the case. Followers of Dionysus were also often followers of other important agricultural gods, such as Demeter, with whom he shared the focus of the Elysian festivals.

The Greeks considered Dionysus something of a foreign god, and he was known to “return” to the East in his older years and was gone for many years from the Greek pantheon. Much of these travels had to do with the spreading of wine growing techniques by the wine god himself. It is said that it was on these travels that he met up once more with his grandmother Rhea, who the Romans knew as the nature goddess Cybele, who helped teach him how to refine his agricultural techniques with both physical and mystical methods.

Eventually, the hard-partying god of wine and societal liberation settled down and married the mortal Ariadne, daughter of King Minos. Surprisingly, he never strayed from her and was always faithful - not a hallmark of the gods. Together they had many children, but Dionysus never truly gave up his love and wine and partying.

Doris - A Sea Nymph, mother of the Nereids.

Eileithyia - Goddess of childbirth.

Eireisone - The deity who embodied the sacred ceremonial olive branch.

Electra - One of the seven Pleiades.

Elpis - The spirit of Hope.

Enyo - A (minor) goddess of war, connected to Eris.

Eos - Goddess of the Dawn.

Erato - One of the Muses - represents Lyrics/Love Poetry.

Erebus - God of darkness.

Eris - Goddess of strife, connected to Enyo.

Eros - God of love, procreation and sexual desire.

Eurus - The East Wind - One of the Anemoi (wind gods).

Euterpe - One of the Muses - represents Music/Lyrics/Poetry.

Gaia - Goddess of the Earth, also known as Mother Earth.

Glaucus - A fisherman turned immortal, turned Argonaut, turned a god of the sea.

Hades - God of the Dead, King of the Underworld. In Greek mythology Hades reigned over the dead as the ruler of the Underworld. Though one of the major Olympian gods, he is somewhat separated from the rest of the gods and goddesses because of his unique position. Rather than reside on Mount Olympus with Zeus and others, Hades is forced to hold over the Underworld - the land of the dead where those who have passed away become his subjects.

Throughout Greek mythology Hades been firmly planted in the role of death, this wasn't necessarily always the case. In fact, with a little better luck he could have had a pretty sweet gig ruling over the sky, sea, or land. After overtaking the previously ruling Titans, Hades and his brothers Zeus and Poseidon decided to divide control of the cosmos into three parts - the sky and Heavens, the sea, and the Underworld. All three, along with the other gods and goddesses would share dominion over the land and those who lived upon it. To make things fair, the brothers drew lots to see who would command which. Best pick got the Heavens, second got the sea, and the worst draw (which nobody really wanted) was the Underworld. Zeus got the Heavens, Poseidon the sea, and Hades literally got to live in a hellhole.

Comparing the Underworld (which is often also called "Hades") to the modern vision of Hell is not totally accurate. For most major modern religions, the concept of Hell is a (usually fiery) land of fear and agony where the wicked go to spend the rest of eternity paying for their earthly sins. In Greek mythology Hades (the Underworld, not the god) was a place where human souls would go often regardless of what they had done in their corporeal lifetimes. The only real alternative was being made an immortal by the gods, where one would get to live in Zeus's realm as lesser than the gods but higher than living humans. Being given immortality was incredibly rare and only the great heroes of Greek mythology could even sniff at this possibility. Nobody could count on it happening as a guarantee.



That said, the Underworld wasn't exactly the "place to be". The other gods greatly preferred living on any of the other planes of the cosmos leaving Hades on his own for the most part. All alone and unable to find a mate among the goddesses, he petitioned his brother Zeus to give him a bride to live in the Underworld with him. Zeus knew that none of the goddesses would want to live in the Underworld so he devised a plan to kidnap his own daughter, the spring goddess Persephone, and force her to become Queen of the Underworld. The news of her daughter's forced marriage did not please Demeter, goddess of harvests, who threatened to ruin all the crops of the earth if her daughter was not returned. This left Zeus with a difficult decision. He could not deny his brother of a wife but at the same time he could not

let all of humanity starve to death, so he came up with a compromise. Every year in the spring season, Persephone was allowed to leave the Underworld and return to the earth where she would herald the end of winter and the growth of new plants. When winter began again Persephone would return to the Underworld, causing plant life to die off until her return.

One of the lesser known aspects among the myths of Hades was that the god of death was also considered a god of riches. In Greek mythology Hades ruled over the buried wealth of the earth, including gold, silver, and other minerals as well as the rich, fertile soil that helped grow great harvests. It was said that this King of the afterlife was exceptionally concerned with the loyalty of his subjects, most of whom were the dead who lived with him in the Underworld. He employed the three-headed dog Cerberus to guard the gates in and out of his realm to ensure the living could not enter and the dead could not leave.

Harmonia - Goddess of Harmony and Concord.

Hebe - Goddess of youth.

Hecate - Goddess of magic, witchcraft, ghosts, and the undead.

Helios - (Sol) God of the Sun.

Hemera - Goddess of daylight.

Hephaestus - God of fire and blacksmithing who created weapons for the gods. The Greek god Hephaestus (also known as Hephaistos) was the god of fire, metallurgy, and blacksmiths. Because of his great skills at metal crafting he was also the blacksmith of the gods, creating some of Greek mythology's greatest weapons and armor, including Hermes' helmet and Achilles' shield. He wasn't just a weapon-maker, though. The Greek god of fire also represented craftsmen and artisans of all kinds, though he was primarily known for his metal crafting using his hammer and anvil in the hot fires of his forge.

For a Greek god Hephaestus has a somewhat sad story. Different versions of his story vary slightly through Greek mythology, but the effect remains the same. In one version, the great goddess Hera gave birth to Hephaestus without the help of her husband Zeus as revenge for his immaculate conception of Athena, who was born fully grown and armed from Zeus's head. The other version has Hephaestus splitting open Zeus's head with an axe to release the fully-grown Athena. Either way, the two main gods were not too happy with the Greek god of fire from the beginning.

Hephaestus was the only Greek god or goddess who was disabled. He was born with a bad leg that he had trouble walking on, and was said to have been uglier than any of the other gods. In the eyes of his mother he was imperfect, so she threw him into the sea. Luckily a group of sea nymphs rescued him, but he was never welcome on Mount Olympus along with the other gods.

Being a Greek god Hephaestus wasn't going to just sit back and take the abuse, so using his incredible metallurgy skill, he crafted a beautiful golden throne for his mother to sit on. What nobody else knew though, was that the throne was cursed and that once Hera sat upon the throne, she could never get up. After the other gods tried in vain to free her, they eventually got so desperate that they begged Hephaestus to return to Mount Olympus, giving him a permanent place there if he released his mother. Hephaestus refused until his friend Dionysus, the god of wine, got him drunk enough to agree. Once there, the fire god refused to release Hera unless she promised to make Aphrodite, the love goddess, his wife. Having no choice, Hera agreed, and thus the ugliest god of all was married to the most beautiful goddess. Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance, must have been proud. The plan didn't work exceptionally well in the long run, as Aphrodite eventually fell in love with Ares, the god of war - whom she eventually married instead.

Hera - Goddess of goddesses, women, and marriage and wife of Zeus. Hera, Greek goddess of marriage, womanhood, and childbirth, was also known as queen of the gods. Her name literally means "lady", which could well be interpreted as "The Lady", since she was considered the alpha female of all of the Greek goddesses. She was said to be one of the most beautiful - a trait that seems to have been of extremely high importance to the goddesses, but was also one of the most jealous and spiteful of anyone in Greek mythology.

Not that she didn't have good reason to be. Despite being the goddess of marriage, few women in history have had to deal with a less faithful husband than Hera. Greek goddess or not, despite her best efforts she could not keep her husband Zeus from constantly cheating on her with both human women and other goddesses. Hera's response in nearly every situation was to seek revenge on both Zeus's lovers and the children that they bore. At one point she was even said to have given birth to the fire god Hephaestus all by herself as revenge for Zeus birthing Athena on his own.

Despite their tumultuous relationship, Zeus and Hera were most certainly the "power couple" of the Olympians. Zeus famously courted Hera by disguising himself as a cuckoo bird (a symbol connected to Hera throughout

Greek mythology) and taking shelter inside her clothes during a rainstorm. After she grew close to the bird Zeus returned to his human form and promised to marry the beautiful goddess, who was far from an easy catch.

Together they gave birth to the god of war, Ares, Eilithyia, goddess of the birth-bed, Eris, goddess of discord, and Hebe, the goddess of youth. It is interesting how all of her children represented elements of Hera. Greek goddesses of birth, discord, and youth as well as the mighty god of war seem fitting for Hera, the Greek goddess of birth, and the coming of age for women - who was also often in conflict with her husband and his lovers.

While the majority of myths about Hera have the Greek goddess seeking revenge on those who have wronged her (or her marriage), she was most often considered a goddess of extreme importance as it was thought that her favor would help couples conceive of strong and powerful children. Hera was worshiped highly throughout ancient civilizations, particularly in Crete and at Samos, where the Argonauts built her a great temple.

Heracles - An immortal hero of many Greek legends, the strongest man on Earth.

Hermes - God of commerce and travel, and messenger of the gods. If he had to be limited to a single definition, he would likely be called "Hermes, Greek god of Cunning". Though primarily thought of as "Hermes, the Messenger god", there is much more to this well-known character of Greek mythology than exists in that definition.



Hermes was indeed the messenger of the gods, but not because he was born into that role. Greek mythology tells us that within hours of Hermes birth he flew off and stole the precious cattle of his half-brother Apollo, invented divine worship through sacrifice, and created the lute before returning to his crib. That's quite diligent for a newborn baby, even a newborn god. Of course, Apollo, being the god of prophecy, amongst other things, quickly figured out what had happened and went to confront the parents of Hermes, Greek god Zeus and Greek goddess Maia. Hermes took Apollo to his cattle and played him a song on the lute so impressive that Apollo not only forgave Hermes for his crime, but let him keep the cattle. The two gods were said to have formed a tight friendship after this event.

Within the first few hours of his birth, Hermes became the *de facto* Greek god of travel, thievery, persuasion, diplomacy, and cunning. Then after befriending Apollo, he was taught animal husbandry, language, trade, and hospitality and became a patron god of those as well.

Greek mythology tends to box Hermes in as one who simply runs errands for Zeus and narrates the occasional myth, but Hermes was a legitimate Greek god whose astute social skills and quick, clever mind gave him a great advantage over many of his peers. His role as messenger, or herald, was not a small one. Zeus himself counted on the bright young god to diplomatically spread the word of Zeus's judgment amongst both gods and humans - a role that was not to be taken lightly.

Though he was generally considered a junior member of the Greek gods, Hermes was said to have been responsible for many of the inventions that we associate with ancient Greece to this day. He was thought to have invented the three greatest Greek inventions - the alphabet, numbers, and music, as well as astronomy, gymnastics, measurement, and the use of the olive tree - a staple in the Mediterranean world.

Hermes was regularly depicted wearing a golden helmet or traveling hat, fleet-footed sandals, and carrying a herald's staff. Some artists drew wings on his hat or shoes, but this is thought to have been solely to depict the speed with which he moved - not to say that he literally had wings on his clothing. As a fast and diplomatic god, he was often sent on important errands. One of his regular tasks included escorting the dead from the Overworld to Hades' Underworld.

Few gods played as many roles as Hermes in Greek mythology, yet he often seems to be more of a background character in many Greek myths. This

is probably because he is very social and friendly with both gods and man, and being always on the move. He was indeed an important figure in Greek mythology and is considered responsible for inventing athletic competition which enjoys great popularity to this day.

Hesperus - The Evening Star.

Hestia - Greek goddess of the home and fertility. One of the Hesperides. In Greek mythology Hestia was known as the Goddess of the Hearth. In modern language, that might sound like the same thing as “goddess of the fireplace” or “goddess of the space-heater”, but in ancient Greek mythology it meant much more than that.

In ancient Greece the “hearth” did refer to the home fire, but it represented something more sacred. The hearth was the center point of the home, which meant it was the center point of the family. In the context of a town, the hearth is the center point of the community. In ancient Greece this was taken literally as most towns had a common house, known as the prytaneum, which housed its own hearth. Visitors and immigrants to the town would be greeted there, where there would often be a statue of Hestia nearby as a means of worship.

Those who left to start a new colony would traditionally take a torch lit by the fire of the town hearth and carry it to the location of their new town. In the center of this new location they would build a new hearth and set it ablaze with the torch, thus “keeping the home fires burning”.



Hestia didn't have many temples dedicated to her, as most other gods of her stature did, but that wasn't because she was not worshiped. Actually, she was probably worshiped more than any other ancient Greek god or goddess. Every sacrifice made to the gods began with a sacrifice to Hestia. The sacred fire on the sacrificial altar was considered that of Hestia, and so the first portion of each sacrifice to any other god was given to Hestia to receive her blessing for the offering.

A sister to the great Olympian gods of Greek mythology Hestia was the first born child of the titans Chronos and Rhea, who also gave birth to Demeter, Hera, Poseidon, Hades, and Zeus. Hestia is also considered the last-born, due to the story of Chronos eating all of his children (except Zeus), then regurgitating them in reverse-order, meaning Hestia was the last to be re-born from him. Unlike her sisters Demeter and Hera (Greek mythology) Hestia was a virgin goddess her whole existence. She stubbornly refused to marry and even asked Zeus to make it so that she would be a maiden forever. He did, and even went so far as to ensure that the love goddess Aphrodite (Greek mythology) could not use her powers to make Hestia fall in love and change her mind

Hygea - Goddess of cleanliness and hygiene.

Hymenaios - God of weddings.

Hypnos - God of sleep.

Iris - Goddess of rainbows.

Khione - The goddess of snow and daughter of the North Wind (Boreas).

Kotys - A Dionysian goddess whose celebrations were wild and lascivious.

Kratos - A god of strength and power. Kratos (Greek mythology) is a god of strength and might, who appears briefly in Greek mythology, but long enough to make an impression.

Kratos is the brother of Nike (Greek goddess of victory), Bia (Greek goddess of force), and Zelus (Greek god of rivalry). The four of them together were the first to stand with Zeus (Greek mythology) as he defended Mount Olympus from the god of monsters Typhon. This is a small, but critical role in Greek mythology, as the story of Typhon is a central myth of the Olympian gods. Outside of this grand battle in which most of the other gods fled, Kratos doesn't play an enormous role in Greek myth stories. However his influence in modern mythology appears to be strong.

Lachseses - (Decima) One of the Fates. Measured the thread of life with her rod.

Maia - One of the seven Pleiades, Goddess of fields.

Mania - Goddess of insanity and the dead.

Merope - One of the seven Pleiades, married to king Sisypheos.

Metis - Titan goddess of wisdom.

Momus - God of satire, writers, and poets.

Morpheus - God of dreams and sleep.

Nemesis - Goddess of retribution (vengeance).

Nereus - Titan God who fathered the Nereids. God of the Sea before Poseidon.

Nike - (Victoria) Goddess of victory. Nike (Greek mythology) is the Greek goddess of victory, both in battle and in sport. The Romans knew her as Victoria, a name that obviously means “victory”, and is still popular today. Nike was one of four children of the Titan god of war Pallas, and the Naiad Styx (not to be confused with the river Styx of Hades Underworld). Her siblings are Kratos (Greek mythology), Bia (Greek mythology), and Zelus (Greek mythology), who represented Strength, Force, and Rivalry, respectively.

Most people recognize the name Nike in association with the globally popular shoe brand. This is not by accident. The founder of Nike (corporation), Phil Knight, chose the name purposely for its association with victory in sport. In fact, everything about the branding of the company comes from the mythology of this goddess.

Interestingly, for a goddess of such fame, there isn't a lot of mythology about Nike (Greek mythology). Most tales of Nike are intermixed with tales of Athena (Greek mythology), the goddess of War and Strategy. Nike and Athena were both said to be among the few gods to stand by the side of Zeus, king of the gods, in the famous war against the king of monsters Typhon for control of Olympus.

This is probably where Nike's run in Greek mythology really begins and ends. It is said that she, along with her siblings, were the first to join Zeus in that battle, and they are often all depicted as standing by his throne as his sentinels. Nike herself was given a golden chariot to lead Zeus's troops into battle.

Notus - The South Wind. One of the Anemoi (wind gods).

Nyx - Goddess of night.

Oceanus - Titan god of the ocean.

Pallas - A giant who was one of the ancient Titan gods of war.

Pan - (Inuus) God of woods, fields, and flocks. Also a Satyr. There were few deities in any mythology as enigmatic as Pan the Greek god of shepherding and living in the wild. He wasn't a shy character, but he lived in the wild, particularly on the mountainsides of Arcadia, and therefore wasn't seen all too often by mortal men.

Pan is perhaps the most well-known of the Satyrs - men with the legs and horns of goats. Like all satyrs, he was fun-loving and energetic, but also moody and prone to temper tantrums. Like their four-hoofed brethren the centaurs, satyrs generally enjoyed drinking, partying, and lusting after ladies. Pan in particular desired nymphs above all other females, which may be due to being raised by nymphs after his mother (whose identity is highly debatable) apparently shunned the goat-god when he was born with a full beard, tail, hoofs, and horns.

Pan's father is the wily Greek messenger god Hermes, who took him to Mount Olympus shortly after his birth where Pan delighted the other gods with his musical talent and fun-loving sense of humor. Though he is strongly connected to Hermes, he is more often talked about in connection with the Greek wine god Dionysus. Satyrs in particular loved Dionysus, who was well-known for his wild parties which included plenty of wine and lots of women.

Most of the time, though, the hoofed god was tending to his flocks in the mountains of Arcadia. A very talented musician like fellow shepherd god Apollo, he may just as well have been called "Pan the Greek god of woodwinds", for he was a master of any wind instrument, particularly his signature pan-pipes which were named after him.

Though not the most intimidating god in Greek mythology, Pan had a conch shell that, when he blew it, would strike fear into the hearts of all who heard it. It is from this that we derive the English word "panic", meaning the feeling that Pan could create among those who opposed him or those he sided with.

Peitha - Goddess of persuasion.

Persephone - Goddess of the spring who lives off-season in the Underworld. Persephone, Greek goddess of the spring season, is the daughter of the king of gods Zeus and the goddess of the harvest Demeter., and a key figure in

Greek mythology. To call Persephone goddess of the Underworld is technically correct, but only to a degree. She does indeed live in the Underworld during the fall and winter seasons, but during the spring and the summer she returns to the Earth to inspire the renewal of life. Upon her return each year new plants grow, trees get back their leaves and create fruit, and animals come out of hibernation and find a mate. Without her and her mother, the goddess of the Harvest, life on Earth would quickly expire.

At one point, sewing the seeds of life was the only role for Persephone. “Goddess of the Underworld” was a title she ever thought she would have, and generally not a title most of the goddesses wanted. The Underworld, ruled exclusively by Hades, was where human souls went after they died. Hades and his brothers, Zeus and Poseidon, drew lots for control over different parts of the universe. Zeus won the sky and heavens, Poseidon the earth and sea, and Hades drew the fiery pits of the Underworld. Most of the gods preferred the Heavens, and none enjoyed visiting the Underworld much. After many years ruling alone, Hades had finally had enough and told Zeus that he needed a companion.



Knowing that no goddess was keen to live in the land of the dead, Zeus offered his own daughter, the spring maiden Persephone, to be the goddess of the Underworld. At the time this seemed to Zeus like a perfect idea - he would marry off his single daughter and at the same time he wouldn't anger any of the other gods by sending one of their daughters to the Underworld.

There was only one problem. Persephone was not his daughter alone. When her mother, Demeter, found out what Zeus had done she was furious. Demeter threatened to destroy every crop and every harvest if her daughter was not returned. This put Zeus in a bind. On one hand he couldn't back out of his promise to Hades, but on the other hand with Persephone in the Underworld and Demeter refusing to do her duty, there was no one left to grow the crops, without which all living things on Earth would die.

Though he was often depicted as a proud warrior, Zeus also had a reputation for being a fair mediator of disagreements between the gods, and this, was perhaps, his finest hour in that regard. In order to half-please all parties, Zeus decreed that Persephone would spend half of the year in the Underworld, when she was not needed on land, and the other half of the year with her mother sewing the seeds of life. This is the ancient Greek explanation of the four changing seasons.



PHEME - Goddess of fame and gossip.

Phosphorus - (Lucifer) The Morning Star.

Plutus - God of wealth.

Pollux - (Polydeuces) One of the twins who represent Gemini.

Polyhymnia - One of the Muses - represents sacred poetry and geometry.

Pontus - Ancient god of the deep sea.

Poseidon - God of the sea and earthquakes. Poseidon, Greek god of the sea, was one of the most powerful of all of the gods in Greek mythology. He was one of the 12 Olympian gods and goddesses who held court on Mount Olympus - the mountain of the gods. Poseidon is the son of Cronos and Rhea, and brother to Zeus, Hades, Demeter, Hestia, and Hera.

After helping Brother Zeus in overtaking control of the world from their father, Cronos, Poseidon was involved in a high-stakes game of drawing lots. The winner would be awarded control over the heavens, second would get control of the sea, and the smallest lot would have control of the Underworld. Thus, the world was divided into three "territories". Zeus controlled the

heavens, Poseidon the sea, and unlucky Hades was forced to live in the Underworld for the rest of his days.

All three brothers would be given equal rule over the land, but in many respects nobody exercised this power more than Poseidon. God of the Sea might well have been his title, but many also considered Poseidon Greek god of earthquakes as well, for he shook the earth so vigorously so often that Hades was afraid the walls of the Underworld might collapse under all of the shaking. He was often associated with bulls and horses - creatures that can shake the earth fairly well themselves.



Known as Neptune in Roman mythology, he was considered an unruly god who was often prone to temper tantrums and angry bouts of revenge. In this way he was much more like Sister Hera than brother Zeus, who often had to resolve Poseidon's conflicts so he wouldn't cause too much destruction. Though he had avoided being relegated to the Underworld, was able to live on Mount Olympus, and was highly recognized and worshiped, Poseidon was often jealous of Zeus's power and authority. At one point he even tried to chain Zeus up, but his plan failed and he was once again put back into his place.

Appropriately, Poseidon, Greek god of the sea, was most often depicted riding atop the ocean waves, sometimes on his chariot pulled by seahorses. He was almost always shown holding his signature weapon, the trident,

which is often used by humans as a fishing spear. Like Zeus, he was typically shown as a strong-bodied man with a full beard and white hair. His wife was the sea nymph Amphitrite, but (like many of the gods) he sired children with many different women. Interestingly, many of these children ended up being monstrous half-breeds including the famous cyclops Polyphemus, the winged-horse Pegasus, and his merman son Triton.

Priapus - A (minor) god of gardens and fertility, best known for having an enormous genetic parts.

Pricus - The immortal father of sea-goats, made into the Capricorn constellation. The origins of Capricorn mythology were practically unknown. The ancient Greeks had sea-goats, but there were little told about them. I found the following myth in a collection known as the Scriptures of Delphi. This finally explains one of mythology's most mysterious constellation myths.

The Capricorn zodiac sign is often interpreted as being either a goat or a sea-goat, which is basically a creature with the front half of a goat and the tail of a fish. In actuality, both goat and sea-goat are appropriate symbols to represent Capricorn mythology. The story behind the Capricorn zodiac sign begins with the sea-goat Pricus. Pricus is the father of the race of sea-goats, who are known to be intelligent and honorable creatures that live in the sea near the shore. They can speak and think and are favored by the gods.

Pricus is tied to Chronos (Greek mythology), the god of time. Chronos is the creator of the immortal Pricus, who shares Chronos's ability to manipulate time.

The legend that ties Pricus to Capricorn mythology begins when the younger sea-goats, Pricus's children, find their way onto the shore. The sea-goats seem to be naturally drawn to the shore. They can use their front goat legs to pull themselves onto the beach and lay in the sun. The longer they stay on shore, though, the more they "evolve" from sea-goats into regular goats. Their fish tails become hind legs and they lose their ability to think and speak, essentially becoming the goats that we know today.

This upsets Pricus a great deal. As the father of the sea-goat race, he is determined to make sure that his children never get to the shore. If they do, he fears they will become mindless animals who can never return to sea. After losing several of his children to the land, Pricus decides to use his ability to reverse time to force his children to return to the sea. During this time reversal, everything on earth, except Pricus, reverses itself to where it was previously, thus the goats revert back to the time to before they returned to land.

Pricus, being unaffected by the time shift, is the only one who knows what is to become of the sea-goats. He tries to warn them, even forbid them from setting foot onto the shore, but no matter what he does, or how many times he reverses time, the sea-goats eventually still find their way onto land and become regular goats. The pivotal moment in Capricorn mythology occurs when Pricus finally realizes that he cannot control the destiny of his children, and that trying to keep them in the sea will never work, no matter how many times he tries to “start over”. He resigns himself to his loneliness, and chooses to no longer reverse time, instead letting his children live their lives out to their own destiny.

In his misery, Pricus begs Chronos to let him die, as he cannot bear to be the only sea-goat left. Chronos instead allows him to live out his immortality in the sky, as the constellation Capricorn. Now he can see his children even on the highest mountain tops from the stars.

Proteus - An early sea god before Poseidon.

Rhea - (Cybele) Goddess of nature.

Selene - (Luna) Goddess of the Moon and the ‘mother’ of vampires. Until recently, Selene the moon goddess was a minor figure in ancient Greek mythology. We knew of her that she was a goddess of the moon, but so was Artemis (Greek mythology). Most mythologists assumed that Selene was an older moon goddess that was replaced later by Artemis in myth. The only other significant story mentioning Selene in ancient Greek mythology is that of the Nemean Lion, whom it is said that Selene had great affection for.

Before she was Selene, the Moon Goddess, she was a simple human woman named Selene who worked at the Temple of Apollo in Delphi. It is believed that her sister was the Pythia, or Oracle, of the temple. Either way, Selene worked as a Maiden of the Temple, who assisted the Oracle and cared for the temple. Selene was a worshiper of Apollo (Greek mythology), the sun god, originally, until he cursed her true love, Ambrogio, who eventually became the first vampire. The couple was given protection by Apollo’s sister Artemis, the moon goddess, and they moved to Ephesus to worship and serve Artemis at her famous temple there.

Ambrogio was immortal and did not age, but Selene was still mortal and eventually became older and presumably sick. In exchange for their protection, Artemis insisted that the couple could never touch (Artemis was a virgin goddess and all of her closest followers were virgins as well). Therefore the couple never had children. On Selene’s deathbed, Artemis

allowed Ambrogio, now a vampire, to drink Selene's blood. Their combined blood could create their "children" after Selene's death, essentially turning any human who drank the blood into a vampire.

Selene died and Artemis made her an immortal goddess of the moon. Specifically, "Selene the moon goddess" is actually "Selene the moonlight goddess". Selene is the personification of the moonlight that finds its way to Earth. In this form, she can finally touch her husband and children.

Sterope - One of the seven Pleiades, who bore a child of Ares.

Styx - A Naiad who was the first to aid Zeus in the Titan war. (Not to be confused with the river Styx).

Tartarus - God of the depths of the Underworld, a great storm pit, and the father of Typhon.

Taygete - One of the seven Pleiades, a mountain nymph.

Terpsichore - One of the Muses that represented Dancing.

Thalia - One of the Muses that represented Comedy.

Thanatos - (Mors) God of death.

Themis - Ancient goddess of divine order, law, and custom.

Thetis - Leader of the Nereids, a shapeshifter, and a prophet. Thetis is most famously the mother of Achilles, the great (almost) invincible hero whose only weakness was a small spot on his heel (known now and forever as the "Achilles Tendon"). She wasn't just the mother of a hero; she was also the queen of the Nereids, the fifty water-nymph daughters of Nerius and Doris. She was also a prophet and could see omens of the future, much like the Oracles of Delphi.

It is said that Zeus himself desired her, but she rebuffed his advances time and time again. That is until Themis, one of the goddesses of divine order and custom herself revealed that the Fates had decided that Thetis would one day have a son who was greater and stronger than his father. Being the egomaniac and control freak that he was, Zeus couldn't stand the thought of having a more powerful son, so he set the Nereid Queen up with the mortal Peleus, one of the Argonauts. Relieved, Zeus threw the couple a huge wedding that all of the gods attended. Together the newlyweds gave birth to Achilles who turned out to be one of myth's greatest heroes and led the Greeks to victory in the Trojan War.

Triton - Trumpeter of the sea and messenger of the deep.

Tyche - Goddess of fortune and prosperity.

Typhon - God of monsters, storms, and volcanoes. He Challenged Zeus for control of Mount Olympus. There are gods, and there are monsters, but rarely are there gods that are also monsters. In Greek mythology, there is no god/monster as powerful, dangerous, and downright deadly as Typhon. He is called Typho, Typhaon, Typhoeus, Typhos, and Typhon in Greek mythology, but regardless of which name is mentioned, it's not hard to figure out who is being talked about. Most often described as the most horrifying and powerful monster in legend, no beast or demon was as feared by the gods as was Typhon in Greek mythology.

He is described in many different ways, varying slightly from legend to legend, but aggregating the most popular descriptions gives us this image of the beast:

He was a giant - so tall his head touched the stars. He had the torso of a man, but each leg was an enormous viper coil that writhed and hissed as he moved. He had a main head that hosted 100 snake heads that constantly screamed the sounds of various animals. All that is described of his human-like head are glowing red eyes that drove fear into the hearts of all that looked upon them, and a "savage jaw" that breathed fire. He had hundreds of wings all over his body, and instead of ten fingers his hands were made of 100 deadly serpents.

Typhon, in Greek mythology, was not just a monster. He was also a god - the last child of Gaia (the Earth) and Tartarus (a violent and bottomless storm pit) who were both considered gods. Some myths say he was instead the child of Hera (Greek mythology), but a better explanation comes from a story where Hera, in a fit of anger toward Zeus (Greek mythology) goes to Gaia and Tartarus and beseeches them to create a god more powerful than Zeus. Thus, Typhon is born and Hera gets a little more than she bargained for.

The most famous legend involving Typhon in Greek mythology was when the monster god decided that he was tired of being an outcast and was going to take over Mount Olympus, home of the gods. Naturally, Zeus (Greek Mythology) was not exactly thrilled with this idea and decided to stay and battle Typhon. With the exception of Athena, all of the other Greek gods and goddesses fled the scene, opting to change forms and hide from the monster rather than try to fight him.

Different versions of this legend have different details about exactly how the fight goes down, but all agree that it was long and drawn out. In the end,

Zeus flings Typhon back into Tartarus (Greek Mythology) and throws Mount Etna on top of him, forever trapping him under its weight. Being the fire-breathing monster he is, Typhon is believed to constantly struggle to become free, causing earthquakes and volcanic eruptions each time he moves.

Typhon, in Greek mythology, was married to the half-woman half-serpent Echidna, and together they bore some of the most horrifying creatures in all of mythological history. Half-snake, half-woman, all monsters. Echidna (Greek mythology) is the mother of the most famous and fearsome of Greek monsters. Married to the god/monster Typhon (Greek mythology), the two beasts bore a brood of children that only a half-serpent mother could love.

Echidna is best known for being the mother of monsters. There's not a huge library of "Echidna mythology" lying around somewhere where she does a bunch of other things. She is sometimes confused with Python of Greek mythology that guards the Garden of Hesperides, though that role is actually that of her child Ladon.

Ladon was an enormous Draco (snake), while Echidna was only half-snake. She, like Typhon, had the bottom half of a snake (or several snakes according to which myth you read), and the torso of a human. She did have snakes for hair, a trait she passed down to her child, the Gorgon. Most people would recognize Medusa as the most famous gorgon, though she is not actually related to Echidna in any way (we'll get to that elsewhere on the site).

Like many of history's mothers, Echidna's legacy is destined to be carried on by the children she left behind. She herself was thought to preside over the corruption, rotting, and pestilence of the lower dregs of the earth. Most myths have her residing in Tartarus (Greek mythology), who is both a storm-pit of the underworld and father to Typhon.

What ended up happening to Echidna is lost in myth, though we can assume that she still lives in Tartarus, keeping her husband Typhon Company while he struggles beneath Mount Etna.

Gorgon - The snake-haired and snake-bodied humanoid that was created in its mother's image. Its stare could turn a person to stone. Medusa became one of these creatures in a later myth.

Cerberus - The three-headed dog that guards the entrance to Hades. Cerberus (Greek mythology) is best known as the guardian to the gates of Hades (the Underworld).

In Greek mythology Cerberus is depicted as a dog with three ferocious heads and the tail of a snake. He is one of the great Greek monsters born unto

Typhon and Echidna. His sole task is essentially be the “bouncer” of Hades. As the rules go, only the dead may enter the Underworld, and none may leave.

There are only a couple of myths in Greek mythology where a hero gets the better of Cerberus. The first is when Orpheus (Greek mythology), the famed musician, sneaks into Hades by lulling the usually unstoppable Cerberus to sleep with his beautiful music. The second myth is when Hercules (Greek mythology), with the approval of Hades (Greek mythology), the god of the Underworld, gets Cerberus in a choke hold, knocks him out, and kidnaps him. He is eventually returned to his post where he remains to this day.

Other than these myths, the three-headed hound of Hell is an unmatched force for anyone trying to get in or out of Hades without express permission. In vampire mythology, it is said that the souls of all vampires are held in a container (a coffin, appropriately), somewhere in Hades. According to the Vampire Origin Story, because of a deal made by the first vampire, if any vampire should ever return to Hades they can get in (because technically they are dead), but they can never leave again.

Some believe that due to his unmatched dedication to the gods of ancient Greece, Cerberus was eventually released by Hades and was able to join the gods in a more human immortal form, thereafter being known by the name Naberius.

Chimera - Part-lion, part-goat, part-snake - all monster. The Chimera, in mythology, is a Greek monster with the body and head of a lion with a snake for a tail and a fire-breathing goat head coming from its back. Different versions of Chimera mythology have slightly different descriptions, such as wings on the back or the back legs of a snake, but most follow the description above. No matter how you describe it, the Chimera is the daughter of Greek monster gods Typhon and Echidna, which means its siblings include other famous Greek monsters such as The Sphinx, Cerberus, and Ladon. Merely seeing the Chimera was a bad omen. The Greek monster regularly appeared before disasters such as shipwrecks, violent storms, and volcanic eruptions.

The most famous moment involving the Chimera in Greek mythology is when the Greek hero Bellerophon, with the help of his trusty winged steed, Pegasus, killed the Chimera with a bow and arrow from the sky above. Beyond mythology, the term “chimera” is used in scientific research to explain an animal that contains more than one set of genetic codings. This is a clear nod to the Greek monster, in that the monster itself is a combination of three different ‘normal’ animals. The use of the word “chimera” as a way of

describing a hybrid “monster” of sorts seems to be the most lasting element of the Chimera mythology. In later medieval usage, the word was used to describe any hybrid monster combination, and had a deep connection to the evil and demonic. There are many hybrid monsters, even if you just look at Greek monsters alone, so it’s somewhat interesting that the Chimera was the one of all of them to end up defining a term that is still used in multiple purposes today.

Gorgon - The snake-haired and snake-bodied humanoid that was created in its mother’s image. Its stare could turn a person to stone. Medusa became one of these creatures in a later myth.

Sphinx – The half-human, half-lion that forces those who meet to answer its riddles, or to die.

Hydra - The nine-headed serpent who grew two new heads for every one that was cut off.



Nemean Lion - The giant lion with impenetrable hide that becomes the constellation Leo. Not much is known about the Nemean Lion other than the story of Hercules (Greek mythology) and the first of his twelve trials. Most mythologists believe that this is the figure representing the constellation of Leo. For a little-known monster of mythology, that’s not a bad legacy.

The Nemean Lion is named as such because he was a gigantic, ferocious lion with impenetrable skin that lived in a cave in the land of Nemea. Interestingly, while most other monsters in Greek mythology have a name, the Nemean Lion doesn't seem to. I mean, what did they call him before he moved to Nemea? "The Lion"? Well, As the son of god/monster Typhon and his lady/snake bride Echidna, this makes this fearsome feline a sibling of some of mythology's greatest monsters: The Sphinx, Cerberus, The Hydra, Chimera, and others.



Nemean Lion killed by Heracles

The goddess Hera (Greek mythology) has essentially played "Godmother" to most of Greek myth's great monsters, including the Lion of Nemea. It was Hera who first begged Gaia and Tartarus to create the god/monster Typhon, who happens to be the Lion's father. Hera, angry at her husband Zeus, sent the lion to Nemea to live, where there just so happens to be a shrine to Zeus. Thus anyone wanting to worship Zeus would have to get through a gigantic, almost indestructible lion first.

This was a problem for the people of Nemea, who couldn't kill the lion nor keep it from killing them or their livestock. The Nemean Lion was said to be twice the size of a normal lion, so you can imagine that it had quite the appetite.

In the first of his trials, Hercules (Greek mythology) is tasked with finding and killing the monstrous lion. Upon finding it, Hercules shoots it with arrows,

which do nothing but make it really, really mad. This is approximately when Hercules figures out that the lion's hide cannot be pierced. Being Hercules (Greek mythology), he decides to make a mad dash at the Lion rather than run away. The lion runs into its cave, which has two entrances. Long story short, Hercules blocks off an entrance, rushes into the cave, hits the lion over the head with his club hard enough to stun it, then proceeds to strangle it to death with his bare hands.

In order to prove his victory, Hercules (Greek mythology) is supposed to bring the pelt of the Nemean Lion back to King Eurystheus (who had tasked him with killing the lion in the first place). Hercules tries to cut the pelt off the lion's body before remembering that it's still impenetrable. After trying a few different tactics, he finally figures out that the only thing that can cut the skin of lion is its own claws. Eventually he is able to use the claws to skin the lion. He brings the pelt back to Eurystheus but ends up keeping it to use as his own personal armor.

This is where the story supposedly connects to the Constellation Leo myth. It is repeatedly mentioned in different versions of this story that either Zeus (Greek mythology) or Hera (Greek mythology) decide at this point to create the Leo constellation. Why they do this doesn't seem to be either understood nor all that important to the mythographers. Most legends assume that this is done as an ode to Hercules, but if that is the case, why is the Nemean Lion the one that ascends to the stars, which is typically reserved as an honor?

Orthros - The two-headed dog that lived with giants. Orthros (Greek mythology) was a two-headed dog born to Greek mythology's most infamous monster parents Typhon and Echidna. Mythology tells us extremely little about this potentially fascinating beast whose sole purpose in myth seemed to be getting unceremoniously slain by the jerk/hero Hercules.

Ladon - The snake that guarded the golden apples in the Garden of the Hesperides.

Urania - One of the Muses - represented Astronomy and Astrology.

Uranus - God of the sky and the heavens. Father of the Titans.

Zelus - The god of zeal, rivalry, and jealousy.

Zephyrus - The West Wind. One of the Anemoi (wind gods).

And last, but not the least is **The Great almighty Zeus** - Leader of the Olympic gods, and god of lightning, thunder, and the heavens. As King of Gods Zeus [also known as the Roman god Jupiter] could be considered the very face

of Greek mythology. Zeus, Greek god of lightning, thunder, rain, the sky, the heavens, and the gods themselves, rightfully earned his top spot among the Olympic gods and goddesses by leading a successful revolution against the Titans.

The main Olympian gods had the same mother and father—the Titans Cronos and Rhea. The mother of Cronos was Gaia, mother Earth, who predicted that one of their children would overthrow the Titans in take control of the world. Fearing that his children would overthrow him Cronos deliberately ate his children one by one. Finally Rhea could take no more, and after the birth of her youngest son Zeus she tricked Cronos by wrapping a rock in a blanket and telling him it was his son. Of course Cronos ate the rock immediately and thought no more about it. Rhea hid Zeus from his father in a cave in Crete, where he was raised by the nymph Amalthea.

When he was fully grown, Zeus led a revolt against the Titans and won; in the process freeing his brothers and sisters from their father's stomach. Though he was the youngest, Zeus was the clear leader among his siblings, who in many myths call him "father" rather than "brother". To make things fair he and his brothers Hades and Poseidon drew lots to determine who would rule which parts of the universe. Winning first pick Zeus chose the sky and heavens as his domain. Poseidon chose the earth and sea, and with last choice Hades became god of the Underworld.

Unlike some of his contemporaries such as Apollo or Hermes, Zeus was never depicted as a young man. In every context, Zeus is seen as an older



man, signifying wisdom, maturity, and leadership. He was often portrayed wielding his signature weapon, the thunderbolt, and was as well known for his great power in battle as he was for his philandering. In earlier art and myths, Zeus is often portrayed as a warrior God with lightning bolt in hand, while later art more often depicts Zeus seated at a throne with Nike, the goddess of victory, by his side.

While he was known for punishing those who did wrong (in his opinion), Zeus was known as a mostly fair and just god, who also gave many favors to those who worshiped him. Zeus regularly watched over the daily lives of both humans and the gods and was often called upon

to settle arguments between them. Even as powerful as he was, Zeus had no command over the three Fates, who determined the life and death cycles of humans. He could not prevent a human from dying, but in rare circumstances he granted immortality to his most favored heroes.

Zeus had no enemies that could truly challenge his power with the exception of his nemesis Typhon, the god of monsters. When Typhon and his monstrous crew tried to take over Mount Olympus, it was the biggest battle that Zeus had faced since he freed his siblings from his father's stomach. While most of the other gods fled, Zeus held his ground and won the day, though things were never quite the same between the gods afterward.

Zeus's siblings include brothers Poseidon and Hades, and sisters Hestia, Demeter, and Hera (who later became his ever-jealous wife). Not surprisingly (considering his many affairs), several younger gods and goddesses claimed him as their father, the most famous being twins Apollo and Artemis (from Leto), Ares and Hephaestus (from Hera), Athena (from Metis), Hermes (from Maia), Dionysos (from Semele), and Persephone (from Demeter). The love goddess Aphrodite was considered his child in some myths, though most of her many birth myths contradict this claim.



So, here we reach the end. I would be glad to receive your reviews, which are helpful in making the next edition better. Faith and Rituals make our life honourable and calm. So be truthful. If you can't be a god, than behave like one.



Aryavart Sanatan Vahini 'Dharmraj' is a non-profitable socio-political organization based in Ranchi district of Jharkhand (Bharat). It was founded in October, 2012 by Shri Bhagavatananda Guru and 10 others. **Dharmraj** has spread its roots in most of the states of Bharat including Jharkhand, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana, Gujrat, Himachal Pradesh and Bengal. Its slogan is **Yato Dharmastato Jayah** means 'Victory is there, where Dharma exists'. As the government of Bharat is truly offensive towards Hindu culture and traditions, **Dharmraj** is dedicated to preserve The Almighty Sanatan to establish a United Hindu Bharat. Bharat is being continuously attacked by western powers along with Muslim and Christian gangs since more then 11 centuries. So, **Dharmraj** is dedicated to protect the Hindus from their conspiracies related to Love-Jihad, Religion Changing and poisoning the True Bhartiya Cultures. For more information related to the expose of governmental conspiracies, please read the other books of same author or join us on Facebook and You Tube following these links:

- * <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpzVLoyDCxxgDakpYxsbCjg>
- * mail.asvdharmraj@gmail.com
- * The main agendas of **Dharmraj** are listed below:
- * Having full control on domestic economy by promoting regional and home industries.
- * To establish a fair relation between export and import by promoting handicrafts, agriculture, cottage industries, ancient engineering and arts, which would also provide sufficient job opportunities.
- * To preserve old monuments by their real identity (such as Tajmahal, Red Fort, Qutub minar were Hindu temples) and to bring the precious jewels and treasury which was looted by the Arabs and Europeans in these 11 centuries.

- * To abort the current education pattern of Lord Macaulay and establish full Bhartiya Gurukul system enriched by both modern and ancient knowledge.
- * To protect Bhartiya Society and youth from drugs and pornography, and western (un)civilization and to ensure modernization with the help of pure Vedic morals.
- * Full guaranty of the security of the army men and other security sectors and establish a United Hindu Bharat which should be the most powerful nation in every sector including the military.
- * Full ban on slaughtering of all animals (including the Holy Cow) in all aspects like religion, edibles and meat industries.
- * To ensure basic development in the most rural areas also without any displacement of natives or harm to nature.

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- * Shri Bhagavatananda Guru (Director General) +919572106041, +918521539815
- * Vivek Ranjan Mishra (President) +919097857942, +918521924977
- * Brajesh Pandey (Vice-President) +919431535491
- * Brajesh Pathak (Secretary) +919097278733)
- * Abhijeet Dubey (Treasurer & Co-Ordinator) +917319719779
- * Sanjay Mishra (Spokesman) +919798881588
- * Pankaj Dubey (Spokesman) +917779877774